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ABSTRACT

A year-long study evaluated the scope and quality of pre-16 work experience in England and Wales. Its main aims were to map out work experience provision, assess program quality, and examine the impact of new funding. The research included a survey of area work experience coordinators, six detailed case studies, interviews with teachers from 30 schools and 150 employers, and a survey of over 1,200 work experience students. About 95 percent of all young people (about 545,000) went on work experience placements in their last year of compulsory education. Three main approaches to work experience provision were as follows: (1) centralized, with an external agency finding places and matching students; (2) a joint approach with an external agency finding places and the school matching students; and (3) school organized. Health and safety was more a concern to schools than employers, and schools were protective of their role in the matching process. While on their placement, most students were either helping someone do a job or doing odd jobs. Little evidence indicated that work experience was used in the mainstream curriculum. The accreditation of work experience appeared to revolve mainly around the student's own statement on the National Record of Achievement. Work experience relied heavily on a personal subsidy by in-school coordinators, in the form of their own time. (Appendixes include case study details, and instruments. Contains 30 references.) (YLB)

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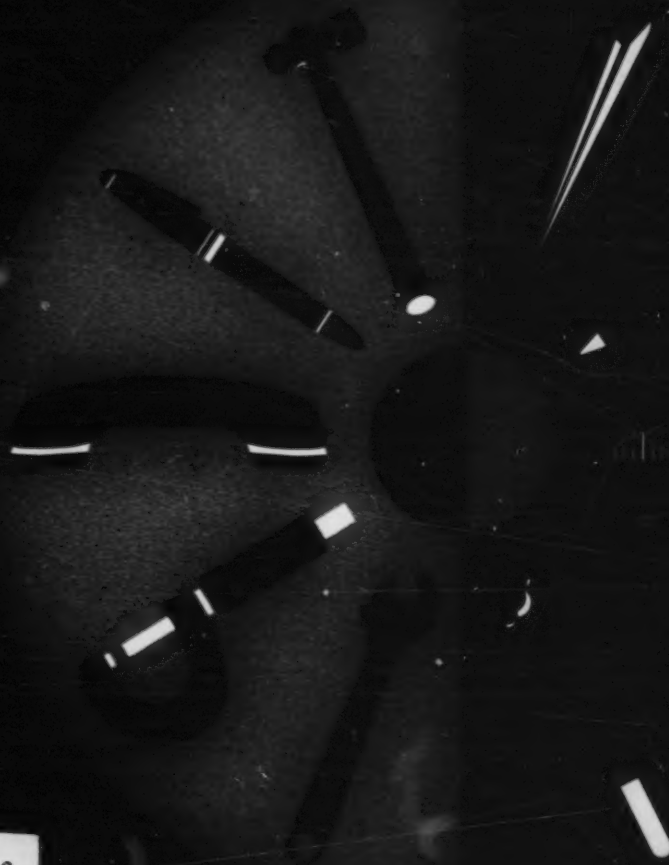

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J Hillage
S Honey
J Kodz
G Pike

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Formerly titled the Institute of Manpower Studies (IMS), the Institute changed its name to the *Institute for Employment Studies* (IES) in Autumn 1994, this name better reflecting the full range of the Institute's activities and involvement.

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Executive Summary

This summary presents the main findings of the year-long study for the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) evaluating the scope and quality of pre-16 work experience in England and Wales. The main aims of the study were to map out work experience provision, to assess the quality of work experience programmes and examine the impact of the new funding provided under the *Competitiveness* White Paper (and *People and Prosperity* in Wales).

The research centred on a survey of area work experience co-ordinators and six detailed case studies, in areas adopting different approaches to work experience. It is based on interviews with teachers (from 30 schools), 150 employers and a survey of over 1,200 work experience students.

Purpose of work experience

Work experience placements appear to serve a wide range of purposes. Students and employers tend to focus on reasons to do with easing the transition between education and employment. Work experience co-ordinators in schools and agencies cite benefits in the areas of increased maturity, increased self confidence and improved motivation. Others, generally those involved in developing policy rather than practice, look to work experience as a means of fulfilling specific learning objectives, such as the development of core skills.

Work experience provision

Around 95 per cent of all young people (some 545,000 in all) go out on work experience placements in their last year of compulsory education. Over half go out on work experience in the Summer term of Year 10. One-third go in the Autumn term of Year 11. The rest go out later, including after their GCSEs.

The main factors affecting the timing of placements were curriculum pressures and the importance attached to academic attainment. Work experience was generally seen as an add-on, rather than integral, part of the school.

Around 60 per cent of placements last two weeks, one-third last one week and the rest are either three weeks long or some other arrangement (such as two separate weeks).

Organisation of placements

There are three main approaches to work experience provision:

- In more than half the country, provision largely is centralised, with an external agency finding and vetting places and matching students to the places on the schools' behalf.
- In just over a quarter of the country, schools mainly adopt a joint approach with an external agency, with the latter finding places and the school matching students to places.
- In the remainder, schools largely organise the whole thing on their own, perhaps with some co-ordination with neighbouring schools and advisory support from a central agency.

Finding placements

Generally, work experience co-ordinators rely on a policy of inertia selling (by going back to past placement providers) and self-help (through students and parents) to recruit new employers to work experience, rather than systematic marketing.

We found little evidence of employer fatigue. Although a few employers felt that they did have less capacity than they used to, most said that they could take more students at other times of the year.

Health and safety

Health and safety was more of a concern to schools than employers and in areas where schools conducted all or some of the checks, rather than where central agencies took on that responsibility.

The other issues that emerged include:

- Not all new placements were checked for health and safety, particularly in school based areas. Even when they were, the process was often conducted by form, questionnaire or telephone rather than personal visit.
- Some schools (a minority) were unaware about exactly what checks should be made.
- Schools were beginning to categorise employers by the degree of risk, and concentrating their resources on visiting ones where the risk was highest.

- Employers reported that health and safety checks were largely cursory, although there was limited evidence of more frequent visits in recent years.

Matching students to placements

Matching students to appropriate placements was considered to be a crucial ingredient of a successful programme. Schools tended to be protective of their role in the matching process, emphasising their knowledge of students' interests and abilities.

Career considerations, rather than curriculum-based considerations, were the most commonly used criteria to match pupils and placements.

Employers did not generally choose students for placements, although there were suggestions among schools that employer selection was rising.

Most students (90 per cent in our survey) are involved in choosing their placement, though generally this choice was restricted to a number of specified placements or general work categories. Students who were involved in choosing their placement, especially those who obtained their first choice, were more satisfied than those who did not.

Pre-placement preparation

Despite the importance attached to pre-placement preparation, a quarter of students said that they had not discussed the details and purpose of their placement before it took place. Only around 40 per cent of students said that they had met with their employer prior to the placement.

Placements

Students in the survey undertook placements with a wide range of employers, although the genders split into a familiar pattern. For example, 80 per cent of placements in the education and health sectors were filled by girls and a similar percentage in the production sector by boys.

While on their placement most students were either 'helping someone do a job' (31 per cent) or 'doing odd jobs' (27 per cent). Just under 19 per cent did an actual job and 17 per cent moved around departments.

Although schools indicated that they visited nearly all students while they were on placements, only three-quarters of the students told us that they had received a visit. Employers felt in-placement visits to be an important element of good practice. The key purpose of most placement visits appears to be to check

on the general welfare of the student, rather than influence the conduct of the placement.

Curriculum integration

All schools issued students with diaries or workbooks to use on their placement. The extent of debriefing on return to school varied and was limited where placements took place near school holidays.

We found little evidence that work experience was used in the mainstream curriculum. It was common in English, although use was declining following changes to the curriculum. Students reported that mathematics was the subject used most on their placement, but that their placement experience was rarely referred to in mathematics lessons.

Accreditation

The accreditation of work experience appears to revolve mainly around the student's own statement in the NRA. Most respondents, particularly from schools and employer, were generally sceptical about the feasibility of using work experience, as currently constituted, as a means of developing and accrediting core skills.

Costs and funding

The full costs of providing work experience places are largely unknown. Central agency costs average £23 per place. This excludes school and employer costs. Where schools contributed to an external agency, the average payment was around £14 to £15 per place.

We concluded that work experience provision relies heavily on a personal subsidy by in-school co-ordinators, in the form of their own time. Furthermore, qualified teachers spend considerable time performing basic administrative functions that could probably be more cost-effectively conducted by a combination of clerical staff and better use of information technology.

In most cases, part of the new funding has been retained by central agencies to fund area-wide improvements in provision, and the rest distributed directly to schools to fund specific activities. The new funding has been used to:

- improve health and safety vetting procedures
- improve employer contacts
- develop quality assurance systems and best practice guidelines
- replace other funding sources (*eg* LEA) which have been in decline.

Conclusions

We concluded that the vast majority of placements are of good quality and the new funding has provided an important impetus to improve provision.

However, perhaps as many as a quarter of placements fall below generally accepted minimum standards. Limited resources, changes in the National Curriculum and the perceived lack of relevance to academic attainment may further constrain the quality of work experience programmes.

Nevertheless, we feel there is scope for further improvements in respect of:

- developing individual learning objectives for each student
- helping central agencies to provide schools with labour market and strategic support
- encouraging schools to provide two-week placements, where they are not yet in place (which would appear to us to be the optimum length taking into account the opportunity cost to schools, the cost to employers and the time it takes for students to reap the full benefit).
- encouraging schools to avoid arranging placements close to school holidays, to maximise the scope for integration of the experience into the curriculum
- developing IT systems so that schools can have on-line access to employer databases and make matches in 'real time'
- providing more clerical support in schools to release high value teacher time to matching and preparation
- ensuring the efficient checking of health and safety and other requirements
- co-ordinating the development of common quality assurance systems to accredit effective schools, and
- disseminating support materials to employers to help them develop worthwhile work experience programmes.

1. Introduction

The development of more and better quality partnerships between education and business has been a priority for government policy for some time. The importance attached to all education business links has been signalled in consecutive government *Competitiveness* White Papers. Work experience placements for 15 and 16 year olds are widely seen as one of the most important education business links (Hillage, 1995). In 1994, government funding provided under the 1994 *Competitiveness* White Paper in England and *People and Prosperity* in Wales (henceforth referred to as new or White Paper funding) was made available to ensure that all pupils have at least one week's work experience in their last year of compulsory education.[1]

In 1995, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) wished to identify the key factors influencing work experience provision and to evaluate the impact of the White Paper funding. It therefore commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to evaluate the scope and quality of pre-16 work experience. This report sets out the findings of the year-long study.

1.1 Aims and objectives

The study had four main aims:

- to provide a detailed mapping of work experience provision
- to assess the quality, and change in quality, of work experience programmes
- to quantify the extent of relevant aspects of work experience
- to assess the benefits of different approaches to the provision of work experience.

In order to meet the objectives of the study, we adopted a three-staged methodology.

- **Stage One** — involved a preliminary literature review and initial interviews to establish the evaluation criteria.

[1] In Wales, placements are required to be a minimum of two weeks long.

- **Stage Two** — comprised a survey of work experience co-ordinators, to quantify the range of provision and to identify appropriate case studies.
- **Stage Three** — was based on case studies in areas adopting different approaches to work experience, to examine provision in depth.

This report presents the findings of all three stages of the study. Details of the methodology are outlined in the next section.

1.2 Research methodology

The two substantive elements of the research involved a survey of work experience co-ordinators in England and Wales and follow-up case studies in six areas, involving interviews and surveys of schools, employers and students.

1.2.1 The survey

This stage of the study involved a survey of all work experience co-ordinators in England and Wales.

Building a sample

At the outset, we assumed that the survey sample would be based on TEC geographical areas. During our initial investigations, it became clear that this was not the most useful geographical base to adopt. The organisation of work experience was based largely on local education authority areas. Some corresponded with the TEC areas where LEAs had combined for the purposes of work experience or where the boundaries were the same.

In order to develop a comprehensive list of work experience co-ordinators, we had to refer to a number of different sources. We were provided with lists of co-ordinators from the Government Regional Offices. However, not all these lists had been completed at the time of the survey. Further contacts were gathered from the Careers Services and Regional Offices of Trident (a charity that provides a work experience service to schools).

Using these sources, a database of work experience co-ordinators was developed. We then contacted local TECs to establish the most appropriate contact for any LEA areas where information was missing.

In total, 122 work experience areas were identified and sent questionnaires. Of these, 110 co-ordinators responded after telephone reminders. Thirteen provided only partial responses. We also received one further full response which came in after the analysis was completed.

The questionnaire

The questionnaire (see Appendix B) was designed in consultation with the DfEE steering group. Its purpose was to collect factual information on the details of provision, the existence of certain procedures and processes, as well as respondents' perception of the use of White Paper funding. It therefore covered a range of issues including:

- background information about the area covered
- number of placements offered
- timing and length of placements
- completion of placements
- organisation of work experience
- management of health and safety
- management of work experience placements
- matching and selection
- cost of work experience placements
- use of White Paper funding.

Response bias

When interpreting the results, it should be borne in mind that this methodology was only able to gather one view for a whole area. This presents problems of precision where practice is not uniform. There is the further difficulty associated with using self-completion questionnaires as it is not possible to assess whether the responses given really reflect practice. It is also not possible to assess the degree to which different respondents' answers vary. Some may be considerably more optimistic than others in areas with similar levels of provision.

However, the in-depth case studies gave further insight into the meaning of attitudes expressed in the questionnaire and we have therefore taken this into account in interpreting the survey results.

1.2.2 The case studies

In the final stage of the study we concentrated on six areas of the country to look in depth at how work experience was organised and the impact of the new funding.

Selection criteria

The six areas were chosen by applying a number of criteria as follows:

- **We concentrated on areas that are not currently receiving TVEI funding — *ie* those in receipt of the White Paper funding.**
- On the basis of the co-ordinators' survey we identified three main systems for work experience provision — school based, centralised and joint (see Chapter 3 and Appendix A) — and sought to go to a mix of each.
- Where there was a centralised system we wanted a mix of providers (*eg* Trident, Careers Service *etc.*).
- We chose areas where the students went out in the summer term of Year 10 and some where they go out in the autumn term of Year 11.
- We also sought a balance of areas by size, geography and region.

Fieldwork

In each of the six areas, we:

- conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the area work experience co-ordinator and representatives from appropriate agencies, such as the EBP, TEC, Careers Service, LEA, Trident *etc.*
- carried out face-to-face interviews with the person responsible for work experience in five schools — selected to represent a mix of areas, age ranges (*ie* 11 to 16 and 11 to 18) and overall attainment. Across the areas as a whole we also included one independent school and one special school.
- in addition, in one of these schools we interviewed a range of other teachers involved with students taking part in work experience (*eg* year teachers, form tutors, subject specialists, senior school managers)[1]
- distributed questionnaires to approximately 50 students in each of the five schools (see Appendix B).
- interviewed a selection of employers face-to-face (generally five or six) and around a further 20 on the telephone.

Across the six areas, we therefore interviewed around 35 'stakeholders' from EBPs and TECs *etc.*, 30 in-school work experience co-ordinators, (including one from an independent school and one from a special school), around 30 other teachers and around 150 employers. In addition, we received returns from all but one (special) school, amounting to 1,241 useable responses in all. Details of the sample are set out in Appendix A.

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[1] In one of the areas, where the two different systems of work experience provision operated, we conducted these extended interviews in two schools.

1.3 Our overall approach

Our general approach to the four research aims (see section 1.1) was to use the area co-ordinators' survey to map provision, and to provide an overview of the quality of provision and the extent to which schools adopted different practices. The case studies were designed to assess the veracity of the general data gathered from the co-ordinators' survey and to form a more comprehensive judgement as to the quality of provision on the ground. We also used the case studies to gain an understanding of the pros and cons of the various approaches adopted.

1.4 The report

The rest of this report is divided into five Chapters.

Chapter 2 sets out the general picture of work experience in England and Wales and discusses the aims of work experience when placements occur, and how long they last.

Chapter 3 looks at the different approaches to providing placements, depending on the extent to which the involvement of an external agency supports schools in the organisation of placements, and whether timing and length of placement varies by type of provision.

Chapter 4 reviews the main elements of a work experience programme and covers the issues involved in finding places, health and safety, matching and selection, pre-placement preparation, the placement itself and what happens after the placement in terms of debriefing and curriculum integration.

In Chapter 5 we consider the costs of work experience, how it is funded and what impact the new White Paper funding has had so far.

Finally, in Chapter 6 we conclude by drawing together some of the overall themes apparent from the research and specifically address the four main aims for the research.

There are four appendices:

- Appendix A looks in more detail at the achieved sample of the students' survey.
- Copies of the students' and the co-ordinators' questionnaires are set out in Appendix B.
- A bibliography of material used in the preliminary stages of the research is presented in Appendix C.
- Appendix D sets out the guidelines for TECs on work experience.

2. The Provision of Work Experience in England and Wales

Work experience placements are provided in a variety of ways around the country. The aim of placements, their timing, their length and the way in which they are organised varies from area to area, and in some places from school to school.

In this chapter we provide an overview picture of the general provision of work experience in England and Wales, covering issues relating to aims, length and timing and completion. The next chapter looks at the way work experience is organised and how the pattern of provision in terms of length and timing varies by the type of system.

2.1 What is work experience all about?

We found no consensus as to the specific purpose of pre-16 work experience. However, this reflects the range of purposes attributed to work experience in the literature.

2.1.1 The theory

The literature offers a wide range of aims for work experience in general. The clearest exposition is provided by Watts (in Miller *et al.*, 1991). He lists ten possible aims:

- **enhancing** — to enable students to deepen their understanding of concepts learned in classroom settings and to apply skills learned in such settings
- **motivational** — to make the school curriculum more meaningful and significant to students, so improving their levels of academic attainment
- **maturational** — to facilitate students' personal and social development
- **investigative** — to enable students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world of work
- **expansive** — to broaden the range of occupations that students are prepared to consider in terms of their personal career planning
- **sampling** — to enable students to test their vocational preference before committing themselves to it

- **preparatory** — to help students to acquire skills and knowledge related to a particular occupational area, which they will be able to apply if they wish to enter employment in that area
- **anticipatory** — to enable students to experience some of the strains of work so that they will be able to manage the transition to work more comfortably
- **placing** — to enable students to establish a relationship with a particular employer which may lead to the offer of a full-time job
- **custodial** — to transfer some of the responsibility for particular students for a period.

Watts positions these aims within a curricular framework using five umbrella headings for the different purposes attached to work experience:

- academic
- personal and social education
- world-of-work learning
- careers education
- vocational course.

Miller (also in Miller *et al.*, 1991) draws attention to the 'work experience triangle' and the tensions that may exist between the outlook of the student (whose views tend to be based on their interests); employers (concerned more with task completion and social competence) and the teacher (interested in curricular aims). Watts demonstrates that each of the purposes of work experience has varying degrees of relevance to these three outlooks.

The then Department for Education (DFE) also set out a range of objectives for work experience in its guide for schools (DFE, 1995a) including:

a) attainment in individual subjects

b) acquisition of vocational qualifications and skills

c) development of self-reliance, flexibility and breadth

d) careers education and advice

e) learning about the world of work

f) general personal and social development

g) breadth of curriculum experience

h) Record of Achievement.

While the last point does not appear to sit easily with the first seven, it does draw attention to the increasing interest in the certification and assessment of work experience as a measurement

of a student's achievement and means by which this can be recognised by employers and others — an issue we look at in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.1.2 The benefits in practice

The diversity of aims came through strongly in our interviews, reflecting the various parties to a work experience programme (*ie* students, schools, employers *etc.)*, that Miller set out. Another party also emerged in the case studies — the TECs, through their role as the channel for White Paper funding.

For instance, in one of our case study areas the local TEC argued that:

> *'There were days when we sent out Year 10 because we thought it was good for them; we can't afford to be that laid back. There still remains a camp that believes the aim of work experience is simply maturation and it is OK as it is. Our view is that it is important to focus on the objectives of placements and the identification of learning outcomes. The aim of work experience being an opportunity to experience working life is not good enough when surrendering three weeks of school curriculum time. We need clearly defined objectives for work experience.'*

Specific learning outcomes, as opposed to general outcomes such as 'learning about the world at work' were rarely seen as the main objects of work experience placements. We found schools tended to concentrate on the motivational and maturational nature of work experience, although not ignoring specific advantages in terms of easing the transition of some students into the labour market (*eg* through the provision of job opportunities, references reinforcement or otherwise of initial career choices). Students and employers tended to be more instrumental, focusing on the opportunities work experience provided in terms of sampling particular careers *etc.*

Below we review some of the main points we encountered in the case studies.

Motivation

A number of the work experience co-ordinators in schools commented on the improved motivation of students on return to school, often manifested by a renewed commitment to study and awareness of what is required to pursue careers or enter the labour market. In one case, the school co-ordinator estimated that 50 to 60 per cent of students arrived back after their placement 'significantly' more motivated and this was built on through the debrief. The school was convinced of its positive effects on attainment. A number of schools provided us with examples of students with behavioural problems returning from their placement *'a changed character'*.

Maturity and self-confidence

In some cases, such as where students had a learning difficulty, special need or merely lacked confidence, work experience was considered valuable as a confidence booster. The objectives were fulfilled if the student managed to turn up to the placement every day, found their way there, used public transport *etc.* One school co-ordinator said:

> *'It's amazing the extent it can build confidence in some of our students, just having got through the whole process.'*

The instinctive response from most employers when discussing the benefits of work experience was to centre on the increased maturity, confidence and social skills of the young person. One very involved employer explained:

> *'Our focus is very much on the personal development side of work experience and a lot of effort is put in to make sure the experience is enjoyable.'*

A couple of employers said they could tell when a placement had gone well purely from the reaction of the student at the end of the placement:

> *'The successful ones are where you can sense improved confidence and maturity and they feel they have "succeeded" or if they "fit in".'*

One retail outlet explained:

> *'We see a lot of change in students in the course of the week — they can approach the public independently which, I can assure you, seems a million miles away when they arrive.'*

Understanding of the world of work

Perhaps the most commonly cited outcome from work experience was a greater understanding of the world of work, to take forward either into the labour market or to post-16 education where a more focused approach to study is often required. In one school we were told:

> *'The main benefit of work experience is for the young person to get used to a working environment, working with adults and getting used to the routine. School is very sheltered. They have it all on a plate.'*

Easing the transition

Work experience is viewed as an important means for students who have not fared well in academic terms and are looking to enter the labour market sooner rather than later to focus on something positive. Several teachers felt that the less academic students get most out of work experience. For instance, one argued:

'It really is seen as a big achievement for them and this serves them well in improving motivation and creating the spark needed to go on and achieve more.'

Many special school students get a job as a result of work experience. Work experience can equip these young people for working life and is thought to be more valuable to them than the national curriculum. In the special school we visited we were told that very few had not had their self esteem raised as a result of work experience.

More generally, schools see potential benefits for all their students in terms of work experience leading to temporary or permanent jobs, and as a source of character references.

Career tasting

There is no doubt that many students see work experience as a careers related activity — 'to help them with career choices'. However, it was rare for school representatives to view this as the main outcome, although often the school co-ordinator would cite successful placements as those where the student returns having been put off a line of work — a negative/positive outcome, as some put it.

Schools appeared to place greater importance on the job sampling aspect of work experience for students with lower attainment levels. In these cases, work experience was seen as an important element of the transition from school to a job or Youth Training place.

A subsidiary objective under this heading is the scope for work experience to reduce occupational stereotyping by giving young people access to occupations they would otherwise be unlikely to experience — although in practice placements seem to follow a predictable pattern (see section 4.6.1).

Development of core skills

Core skills were mentioned by teachers and stakeholders as an outcome from work experience but usually in vague terms, with little conviction that many students have the opportunity to develop them. In a companion study to this, NFER has looked at the impact of pre-16 work experience on the core skills of young people (Weston P *et al.*, 1996). They found only a third of the schools in their sample *'seemed to be strongly committed to the development of core skills'*. In our discussions with schools and employers the most commonly cited aspect of core skill development was communication skills. For the first time, in many cases, young people are in an environment where they are independent of guardians, teachers and peers and can communicate with adults on their own terms.

In one school the main aim of work experience was described as:

> *'Giving students the opportunity to apply skills and to deepen knowledge and understanding of things such as: initiative; co-operation; motivation; problem solving; following instructions; self-confidence; communication; responsibility; teamwork and leadership.'*

Several interviewees commented that work experience, as an educational intervention, was too short and temporary for any firm assessment to be made on the development of such skills.

2.1.3 What's in it for employers?

Employers involve themselves in work experience often because they see it as 'a good thing to do' and want to give something back to the community — most see it providing young people with what they view as 'good experience'. Some had been on work experience themselves. They thought that they had benefited from the opportunity and so were pleased to give current young people the same chance.

Around two-thirds of the interviewees indicated benefits to the company resulting from their involvement in pre-16 work experience. This included: good public relations and marketing; an opportunity to develop links for recruitment purposes, in particular for Youth Training or Modern Apprenticeships; and having an additional pair of hands around (one in ten roughly). In one or two cases fresh ideas were cited as a benefit to the organisation. It was seen to be useful by a few interviewees for employee training purposes and in giving employees fresh motivation through 'having a breath of fresh air about the place'. One employer mentioned improvements in attendance resulting from work experience.

In a number of cases it was noticeable that employers did not specify benefits as such, stating that they were involved merely because schools had asked them to be — a purely responsive approach.

2.1.4 Pre-16 vs post-16 placements

In our preliminary discussions we were drawn to the distinction that some commentators make between pre-16 and post-16 placements, with the former tending to concentrate on non-vocational aims and the latter linked to more vocational outcomes. Those that adopt this view see pre-16 placements as 'educational rather than career-related'.

Around half the employers we interviewed provided post-16 work experience as well as pre-16. They generally felt that there were some additional advantages in taking post-16 work experience. The most common advantage was seen to be in their extra maturity, requiring less supervision and having a clearer

focus as to why they are there and what they want to get out of the placement.

One employer interviewee for a laboratory testing company said that:

> *'In my view sixth formers would benefit more from the placement as they would understand the chemistry of lab testing better. A lot of what we do is over the heads of pre-16s.'*

This employer also had difficulties recruiting 18 year olds, who were felt to be better suited to the work than graduates and thought post-16 placements could help with this.

2.1.5 Conclusion

The wide range of potential benefits from work experience outlined in the literature were also generally expressed in practice by our respondents. While the breadth of the aims expressed from placements may be partly explained by different parties viewing placements from different perspectives and using different terminology, there does appear to be a difference between aims to do with:

- easing the transition between education and the labour market at 16 or beyond — *eg* understanding the world or work, career tasting, securing jobs and references *etc*. Such aims are most often voiced by those directly involved, *ie* students and employers.
- personal and social development — *eg* increased maturity, increased self-confidence and broadening of experience and improved motivation. These aims were generally propounded by work experience organisers in schools and agencies.
- using the workplace as a base for specific skill and knowledge development — *eg* the development and application of core skills. Such aims were most often put forward by educationalists and TECs involved in developing work experience programmes as a whole, rather than the nitty gritty of actual placements. This suggests that TECs, who recently have become more involved in the provision of work experience on the back of the new funding, have taken some of the aims of that funding on board.

Across the range of perspectives we encountered there appeared to be less emphasis on the preparatory and enhancing aspects of work experience (as outlined by Watts, see above) than on the other benefits. Finally, aims undoubtedly vary by the needs of the student, and the success of a placement is likely to be linked to the extent to which it meets those needs. This conclusion places a priority on the extent to which needs are articulated and the extent to which they match what is offered by the placement — *ie* the extent to which the courses are picked for the horses,

rather than the other way around. While we found many general aims expressed for work experience, we found less evidence of meaningful individual learning objectives, especially any linked to personal action plans (see section 4.5).

2.2 Numbers taking work experience

Area co-ordinators were asked to provide approximate proportions of current Year 11 students who will have completed work experience by the end of the 1995/96 academic year. In some cases this proved complicated, either because proportions were different for independent schools and state schools, or because co-ordinators, again, did not know about the independent sector. In one area, for example, the co-ordinator knew that 99 per cent of young people in the state schools undertook work experience compared with only 60 per cent of those in independent schools.

Bearing in mind these problems, the survey found that an average of 94 per cent of the current Year 11 students would have been on work experience by the end of the 1995/96 academic year. One-third of the areas said that 100 per cent took part in placements. In one area, however, only 40 per cent of students were expected to have completed work experience. There was no reason given as to why this proportion was so much lower than all the other areas.

Data from the Youth Cohort Study gathered in spring 1994[1] show a slightly lower proportion having undertaken work experience. This found that 93 per cent of young people were offered work experience in either Years 10 or 11, but only 89 per cent actually did work experience.

Our co-ordinators' survey did not gather data as to why some young people did not go on work experience but one respondent explained that:

> *'15 per cent of students did not go on placements as one very large school refused to take their turn in the autumn placement slot.'*

We found only few examples of students not taking part in work experience placements in our visits to schools. They generally fell into four categories:

- **unauthorised non-attendees at school** — *eg* students who by year 11 were permanently truant
- **authorised non-attendees** — *ie* students who were sick or on holiday
- **school withdrawals** — occasionally schools would not organise a placement for students with major behavioural difficulties

[1] Data gathered in spring 1994 relates to young people who were in Year 11 in academic year 1992/93.

and would either find them what was, in effect, a simulated placement at the school, *eg* with the ground staff, or give them an alternative school based project to do.

- **parental withdrawals** — schools also report that occasionally parents did not give permission for their daughter or son to take part in work experience (mainly because they failed to see the value of it). In these cases the school generally handed over responsibility for their activity to the parent.

Using data provided by the DfEE and Welsh Office for the total number of students in Year 11[1], we estimate that of the current Year 11 group, approximately 545,000 will have received work experience by the end of the academic year whilst approximately 32,000 will have not.

2.3 Timing of work experience

The survey asked respondents what proportion of their current Year 11 students had taken, or were due to take, work experience in which academic terms. The summer term in Year 10 was the most favoured time. The average proportion given by co-ordinators of students taking work experience during this period was 55 per cent. Thirty-five per cent went out in the autumn term, Year 11; around seven per cent in the spring term and just under four per cent took work experience in the summer term, Year 11. Details are given in Table 2.1.[2]

On this basis we estimate that nearly 305,000 young people of Year 10 went out for work experience placements in the summer term of 1995, compared with 193,000 in the autumn term, 31,600 in the 1996 spring term and only 15,300 in the following summer term. This includes students who do two periods of work experience, say one week in the summer of Year 10 and a further week in the autumn of Year 11, as we found in two of the schools we visited.

There is therefore a distinct preference for work experience to take place in the summer term of Year 10. We have no substantive data as to when the placements take place within the term. In some of the case study schools they were near Easter, others around half-term and a few very close to the end of term.

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[1] Using the school population aged 15 on 31 August 1994 as a proxy we estimate that there were 577,323 Year 11 students in England and Wales.

[2] We have also weighted the responses by the number of students in each area to give a better idea of the actual proportions of young people taking work experience during each academic term. These are also given in Table 2.1, but show only small variation from the unweighted data. The reduced number of cases is due to respondents not providing the number of Year 11s in their area or the proportion going on work experience.

Table 2.1: Average proportion of students undertaking work experience, by academic term

Timing of placement	Mean proportion of students	Weighted by number of students
Summer term Year 10	55.4	56.0
Autumn term Year 11	34.6	35.4
Spring term Year 11	6.7	5.8
Summer term Year 11	3.8	2.8
N =	98	72

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

The evidence from the case studies, which may not be representative, was that most placements tended to take place nearer the end rather than the beginning of the summer term.

The most important factors affecting the overall timing of placements (*ie* which year, which term *etc.*) were:

- **curriculum pressure** — a key reason for many schools opting for the summer of Year 10 was the pressure they felt on the curriculum in the next year to complete the GCSE syllabus. As one put it:

  'I'd never get staff to agree to their students going out for two weeks in the GCSE year.'

  'They always go out about the third week in May. It fits in very well with their Year 10 exams just prior to that. We tried doing it before then but it did not work well. They do their exams and then they go out on work experience. They then have half term to recover and come back refreshed. There is less disruption that way. We chose that time through consultation with heads of departments.'

- **importance attached to academic attainment** — linked to pressure of the curriculum was the priority some schools attached to academic achievement. At one extreme, in the one independent school we visited, work experience was confined to the end of Year 11, after the GCSEs. Our interviewee argued:

  'Given that academic success is the greatest priority in the school, you have to give credit to the head that we do as much as we do.'

  'Why first week in July? It has always been done then. It is the end of exams and it does not cut into the academic work. It is the time for sports days, swimming galas etc.'

Other, less influential factors included:

- **geography** — the more urbanised the area, the greater the number of schools and the need for co-ordination between them. Central co-ordinating agencies, *eg* Trident, EBPs *etc.*, try to spread placements throughout the year to make it easier to match supply and demand.
- **student maturity** — views differed on the different levels of maturity displayed by students in Year 10 and those in Year 11.

Some argued that the earlier the better, and towards the end of Year 10 a period of work experience and being treated like an adult had a cathartic effect on young people and helped them prepare for the *'final push in Year 11'*. In this context, work experience was cited as a *'rite of passage'*. Others made a similar point in defence of the autumn of Year 11, as this was the time *'when the penny was starting to drop with regard to GCSEs'* and work experience was thought to be a good way *'to ram the point home'* that doing as well as possible in GCSEs was necessary to have an active and successful working life. At the other end of the scale, some work experience teachers argued that the older the student the more able they were to perform real work tasks and therefore gain the maximum benefit from the experience. A few of the employers visited felt Year 10 students were not mature enough, 14 year olds in particular were felt to be too young.

- **organising placements** — one of the problems of organising placements early in the autumn term is the difficulties confirming placements and accommodating last minute changes during the summer holidays. Having the work experience near to the end of the summer term was seen as easier to organise by one or two interviewees, as it allowed sufficient time to set up and organise the placements.

- **inertia** — in discussion with schools it was clear that tradition had a lot to do with the timing of work experience and that *'it has always been then'* was a common rationale:

  'Work experience used to be an option for Year 10 students as part of what was then called "project work". Then it was suggested it came under PSE and was kept in the summer term as there was more time for those organising to get it sorted out. It's generally seen as less disruptive to GCSEs at that time. It also marks the end of Year 10 and helps them grow up over the summer and become senior pupils in the school.'

  The complications of re-organising the timetable were often cited as a reason for leaving it when it was, although at least one of our schools had recently moved the timing of their placements (to Year 10 to provide more time for GCSEs). The school work experience co-ordinator had tested the impact on GCSE results of the move and found the move had seemed to make no difference either way.

- **employer availability** — employers were thought to be less busy in the autumn than they are in the summer when holidays and seasonal pressures can make providing work experience difficult — *eg* the motor industry in one area. In urban areas, where competition for placements was high, work experience agencies were keen to spread the timing of placements to avoid schools clashing with each other and eating into the stock of placements available.

2.3.1 Employers' views

The timing of placements appears to be determined more by school needs rather than through employer preference.

There were several comments from a couple of areas where there was a concentration of summer Year 10 work experience co-ordination, that employers were restricted in their level of involvement because:

> *'So many schools tend to ask for placements at the same time in the year — July, which is often when staff here, and elsewhere, have holidays, so we are limited. Work experience needs to be more spread over the year.'*

Overall, roughly four in ten of the employers we interviewed felt that there was a problem with schools wanting the same dates, though a similar proportion felt that there was no problem. Those that had a problem with demand tended to be sited in urban areas — where there were a number of schools — and/or offer popular placements, *eg* in the Arts.

Several employers though, were very critical of the lack of co-ordination between some schools where sometimes the large schools go out on placement at the same time. One commented that schools:

> *'Go on about quality and the supply of placements and yet if they were to go out at different times we could almost double our involvement overnight.'*

Another added that:

> *'There is a real problem of bunching. We are overpressed in May and June. All the schools want to go out at the same time. The problem is that they all want to go out at a time when providers tend to start taking holidays, especially those without children. Thus departments are less likely to want to take someone on because they are likely to be short staffed. Over last year they have been encouraging them to run work experience earlier. There is little option for them. If there is no placement there is no placement.'*

However, some employers had found that the schools were spreading out the placements more than they used to:

> *'Placements tend to be spread throughout the year. When we first started they were mainly in the summer because most schools had placements then. When that was the case we were having to turn people away. Now they seem to spread out more. We had one in October, one in February, one in April and two in July. This is much better. We can only take one at a time. We did have a couple from the same school in once but it proved to be too much. Also if the shop is not very busy in the afternoon there is not enough work for two to do. The only time we would definitely not do a placement was between end October and Christmas because it is so hectic it would not be appropriate to run placements.'*

2.3.2 Conclusion

The timing of work experience appeared to be most closely associated with a combination of in-school factors affecting demand for placements and external factors affecting their supply, *ie*:

- the priority attached to work experience in the school and the practicalities of fitting placements within a crowded curriculum, and
- finding placements when demand exceeds supply.

The tendency appears to be that the internal factors are more important than the external. Pressure from the curriculum, and the importance attached to devoting Year 11 to activities directly related to GCSEs and to maximising student (and school league table) performance is likely to lead to an even greater concentration of placements in the summer term. This is likely to be unpopular for employers who already expressed concern about the bunching of placements in June and July.

The timing of work experience could therefore be seen as an indicator of the priority attached to such aspects of the curriculum. However, this does not mean that placements that take place in Year 10 are necessarily not as effective as those in Year 11 — although the timing within the term, and the amount of time in school after the placement to consolidate the experience did seem to be important in this respect. The success of the placement also depends on other factors, including the attitude of the individual, their maturity and the type of placement itself.

2.4 Length of placements

The area co-ordinators' survey found that the most common length of placement was two weeks (see Table 2.2). The average proportion given by co-ordinators was that just over two-thirds of students had placements of this length. A quarter had placements of one week and six per cent had three-week placements. A further 5.7 per cent took placements of other lengths. This average is high because the data is skewed by one area which indicated that 24 per cent of young people take placements of other lengths. This makes a considerable difference when there are only 13 cases involved.

Again we have re-weighted the data to reflect the number of students in each area. Once re-weighted, the proportion of young people taking one-week placements rises to 32 per cent and those on two-week placements falls to 62 per cent. Those on placements of other lengths falls to 0.7 per cent.

Table 2.2: Average proportion of students undertaking work experience, by length of placement

Length of placement	Mean proportion of students	Weighted by number of students
One week	25.5	31.7
Two weeks	67.8	61.6
Three weeks	5.8	6.0
Other	5.7	0.7
N =	98	76

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

2.4.1 Non-standard systems

Of the 13 areas where placements of others lengths took place, the majority (seven) said work experience took place on one or two days per week for an extended period. For two of these areas, the co-ordinators explained that this sort of placement was used for students with special needs.

In two other areas, some work experience lasted nine days, whilst in one area, the co-ordinator said that ten per cent of placements extended beyond 30 days.

One school we visited in the case studies was running a split programme with students having one week in the summer term of Year 10 and a second week in November. This system was felt to be an advantage because it gave the students a chance to do something completely different in the second week, offering them more experience to judge what they want to do. The location of these weeks in the school timetable was again mainly governed by curriculum pressures and the timing of exams.

> *'It is not a problem that it is two weeks. A lot of the kids would not cope with two weeks at a time. Some would but there is a lot in this school who would not. It is mainly because they lack confidence. Many have parents who are unemployed and so they don't know much about the world of work. To go out on work experience is a big strain for them. Also, if they did two weeks at once they would be in the same placement and miss the opportunity of doing something different. It gives them a wider view of work. More choice and more insight into what they do like doing. A lot of kids want to work with kids. They do a week and hate it. In November they can go somewhere else. Sometimes they find that it is not much better and maybe working with kids is OK after all.'*

Another school visited had been running a rolling programme with students going out when places came up. They were able to go out any time between Easter and February of the following year. This year all students will be going out at the same time. This was because work experience was going to be accredited. The co-ordinator felt that it was easier to keep track of the

diaries, on which the accreditation was to be based, if they all had to be handed in at the same time. As a result they did not think they would be able to offer the students so many choices, and it was going to be more difficult to find appropriate placements for everyone in the year group. The benefits of having other teachers available to do visits, and more control of the diaries, were felt to outweigh these disadvantages.

In one or two schools where the placement was timed for the last week of the summer or autumn term, students were encouraged to arrange an additional week and, where possible, some holiday work. It was considered especially useful if the students could organise it as it provided a more realistic impression of the world of work. However, in practice this was by no means open to all students and was not really part of the overall scheme.

2.4.2 Factors affecting length of placement

The factors affecting the length of placements are similar to those which influence the timing: *ie* curriculum pressure, the priority attached to the activity, and tradition.

Another factor in the equation is the overhead involved in organising placements and whether it is a good investment for just one week. One school we went to had reduced the length of placements from two weeks to one. The co-ordinator felt that the one-week placement was of less value and not worth the effort to set them all up.

In one of our case study areas most of the schools went out on three-week placements, and had done so for the past 17 years, although one school offered two weeks and then one week during school holidays. There was little resistance to three-week placements in schools, and the employers visited generally supported the three-week length. However, one school had recently reduced from three to two weeks due to curriculum pressures and we were also told of another school which was considering moving to two weeks.

It is estimated that a three-week work experience placement is equivalent to the time allocated to one GCSE subject in curriculum. Because of this, it was generally felt that preparation and debriefing needed to be taken very seriously. Three weeks was considered to be much better by intermediaries and most of schools and employers visited in the area. The general view was that the student was quiet for first few days, during the second week they settled into the placement and gained an understanding of what was going on, and in the third week they had more confidence, started to be productive and were able to work on their own.

2.4.3 Students' views

In the students' survey, respondents were asked whether or not they thought their placement was long enough. Just over half (52 per cent) agreed with the statement *'my placement was not long enough'* and 26 per cent disagreed. Somewhat surprisingly, the length of placement had little effect on student views, with those on three-week placements being most inclined to say that their placement was *not* long enough — 55 per cent of those on three-week placements thought they were not long enough, while 53 per cent and 50 per cent of those on, respectively, one and two week placements felt this way. These differences are not statistically significant.

There was little to separate students between the case study areas in their views on the length of placement.

2.4.4 Employers' views

Roughly half the employers we interviewed had no preference in terms of the length of placement. The other half were fairly evenly split between those preferring two weeks and those thinking one week was best. A few employers expressed a preference for three weeks.

When asked for the reasoning behind their preference it is interesting to note that many interviewees, especially those preferring one-week placements, expressed their views in negative or defensive terms such as — *'we haven't got the time to take them for longer'*, *'we haven't got enough for them to do'* — as opposed to positive reasoning such as — *'it is a sensible length of time to get a good flavour of the work place'*.

One comment concerning the value of two-week placements was:

> *'it takes three or four days just to get to know them and for them to feel comfortable. You need the second week to get a real flavour of what work is like, otherwise it is all novelty value.'*

A couple of employers commented that for three-week placements to be a success *'real work is required.'*

Some employers argued that the appropriate length of the placement depended upon the nature of the work. For example, one large public sector provider of work experience felt that in some departments work experience tended to be more observational, out of necessity, and this did not lend itself to two to three-week placements, while others were more active and could go on much longer.

One employer discussed the length of placement in terms of the productivity of the student:

'At one week, we have to put in more effort than we get out, two weeks it evens out and three weeks or longer we benefit from the placement. That's why we take college and university students, not that they are necessarily any better, but are more productive.'

There was also an issue concerning demand. Some employers offer just the one week because there are so many requests for work experience, and it is the only way they can accommodate more students. A couple of employers said they used to take two-week placements but due to the high demand from schools decided to cut it back so they could take more placements. Where one-week placements were the norm, employers were more likely to express a preference for this length.

2.4.5 Conclusion

Views on the appropriateness on the length of placement appeared to vary most strongly with experience, although we detected a degree of *post hoc* rationalisation in the arguments. Thus in places where placements lasted two weeks, both schools and employers thought this was *'about right'*. The typical argument was that: *'students need the first week to get used to the place, in the second they start to learn, but by the third they are too tired to gain further benefit'*. However, where three weeks was the norm it was argued that it was not until the last week that students were confident enough to be productive and gain a real experience. In one-week areas it was generally felt that by week two students became bored. This view was largely contradicted however by the students' survey, which found a majority feeling their placement was too short.

Again the length of placement can be seen as an indicator of the priority attached to work experience placements within the school. The supply of placements is also an important factor, although generally employers did not report many difficulties accommodating two or three-week placements, and employer enthusiasm to participate did not appear to be related to length of placement.

2.5 Completion of placements

Completion of work experience placements was generally felt to be high. Re-weighted by the number of students in each area, 91 per cent of young people were said by respondents to the area co-ordinators' survey to have completed their placements. There was not a great deal of variation, with the lowest levels being 80 per cent in two areas and the highest being 100 per cent for seven areas. We estimate, therefore, that out of all the placements undertaken, only about 47,000 are not completed.

The main reason for not completing placements was due to students' dissatisfaction with the work they were given (see Table 2.3). Just over two-thirds of co-ordinators felt that this was

Table 2.3: Reasons for non-completion

Reason for non-completion	% of areas
Student dissatisfied with work given	64.3
Employer dissatisfied with student	40.5
Placement not what student initially chose	27.4
Student and supervisor did not get on	17.9
Other	21.4
N = 84	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents gave more than one answer.[1]

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

the principal cause of non-completion. As one co-ordinator put it:

> *'The dream of the world of work didn't match the reality — despite extensive preparation at school.'*

Forty one per cent also said that non-completion was due to the employer being dissatisfied with the student. Eighteen per cent put it down to the student not getting on with their supervisor. Of the other reasons given, sickness was the most common.

Students who did not complete their placements were not necessarily offered an alternative. Only six per cent of co-ordinators said that all of them would be found another placement, whilst 82 per cent said that this happened in some cases. Nine per cent stated that no alternative would be offered.

Non-completion did not seem to be a major issue for schools. Non-completions (other than those due to 'legitimate reasons' such as sickness or holidays) were few and far between. When they occurred, the general practice was for the student to finish the placement back in school, working as an assistant in the science laboratories, helping the grounds or maintenance staff *etc.* In only one area — where they had three-week placements organised by a central agency — did we find examples of a young person switching from one placement and to another employer.

> *'Non-completions are very few. We had one not finish two years ago. He was shoplifting. We probably get one each year. Last year we had one sent home because he had a personal hygiene problem and was working in a social caring context. He completed his work experience in school in the science labs. We have had three non-completions out of the last four years.'*

[1] Although the questionnaire instructed the respondent to tick one box, the majority ignored this and ticked as many as they felt applicable. As a result the data has had to be treated as if a multiple response question.

'In four years we have only pulled five kids out. Most had gone more than half way through their placement. We had two in nursery jobs who could not cope. Another was naughty. We also had someone causing trouble but the manager decided to keep him on as it was a good staff training exercise. The individual had done something he should not have with the luncheon vouchers, he started hacking into the computers and was late three times by Tuesday lunchtime. We also had one go to a solicitors who did not realise you had to read to study law. He was also sexist to the people around him. If there is a problem we usually bring them back into school.'

2.5.1 Employers' views

The interviews with employers confirmed the very low numbers of young people not completing their placements. The reasons for the few failures centred on:

- the preparation had been poor on the employer's part
- the school had not prepared the young person in terms of their having a realistic picture of what they would be doing. This could be a problem for high achieving students looking for a more testing experience.
- the young person was difficult.

Poor experiences with students can turn employers away from offering placements. One employer we visited, a retailer, had recently had found that two students had been pilfering.

'I can't afford to have that sort of thing go on in this business. The owner would go crazy if he had found out. I am not having any more for now and if we do have any in the future we'll have to keep a close eye on them.'

2.5.2 Students' survey

Some 94 per cent of the students in our survey completed their placement. Although there was little difference by length of placement, those on one-week placements were, albeit marginally, least likely to complete. Further, those who succeeded in finding their first choice placement were slightly more likely to complete than those who did not (95 per cent compared to 92 per cent completion).

Of those who did not complete their placement, half missed just one day, with the main reason being that the student was ill (cited by 65 per cent of respondents). The next most common reason being that the student did not like the work (mentioned by only ten students). 'Going on holiday' was next (nine students). Non-completion due to not fitting in or being unable to get on with the work or employer was very uncommon. However, it is interesting to note that of the non-completers, 27 per cent indicated they were not happy with their placement, as compared to just seven per cent of those finished their stay. The

reasons given above may therefore mask more underlying dissatisfaction with the placement.

2.5.3 Conclusion

The vast majority of students complete their placement, and non-completion (for reasons other than sickness *etc.*) does not appear to be an issue of concern to schools, students or employers. However, where students do not last the course, it may be an indicator of a failure in preparation on the school's or employer's behalf, or in matching student expectations to what the placement could offer.

2.6 Key points

- Work experience placements appear to serve a wide range of purposes, with opinions varying with the perspective from which placements are viewed:
  - Students and employers tend to focus on reasons to do with easing the transition between education and employment, *eg* understanding the world of work and job sampling.
  - Work experience co-ordinators in schools and agencies generally cite benefits in the areas of increased maturity, increased self confidence and improved motivation.
  - Others, generally those involved in developing policy rather than practice, look to work experience as a means of fulfilling specific learning objectives, such as the development of core skills.
- Employers generally provide placements for reasons of public good rather than private interest. Most see it primarily as a contribution to the community rather than of direct benefit in terms of a recruitment channel or cheap labour.
- Around 95 per cent of all young people (some 545,000 in all) go out on work experience placements in their last year of compulsory education. Those that do not are either sick, on holiday or, more rarely, truant or withdrawn by the school (for behavioural reasons) or, according to schools, withdrawn by parents (who failed to see the value of the experience).
- We estimate that around 56 per cent of students go out on work experience in the summer term of Year 10. One-third go in the autumn term of Year 11. The rest go out later, including after their GCSEs. The main factors affecting the timing of placements were the priority attached to work experience within the school and the practicalities of fitting placements within a crowded curriculum.
- Employers would prefer less bunching around the summer and many said that they could take more placements if they were more evenly spread throughout the year.

- **Around 60 per cent of placements last an average of two weeks, one-third last one week and the rest are either three weeks long or some other arrangements (such as two separate weeks). Again factors such as curriculum pressure, and the priority attached to the activity, appeared to be the main factors affecting the length of placements. There was some evidence that the length of placements was declining.**
- Most students (52 per cent) thought that their placement was not long enough, regardless of whether it lasted one, two or three weeks.
- Well over 90 per cent of students completed their placement. The main reason for non-completion was illness.

3. The Organisation of Work Experience

This chapter looks in broad terms at the way work experience is organised across England and Wales. We distinguish between three main approaches: a school based system, where all aspects of work experience are organised in-house; a centralised system, where an external agency is responsible for finding employers and matching students to places; and joint systems where external agencies and schools work more closely together. We also look at whether the timing and length of placements vary with the type of organisation.

In the next chapter we look at each element of the organisation of work experience in more depth.

3.1 The main approaches to providing work experience

One of the main objects of this study was to map out the provision of work experience in England and Wales. It took us some time to decide on the basis of our cartography as there is no universal delineation of different forms of work experience provision.

The organisation of work experience is predominantly demarked by the LEA area boundary, whether it be county or metropolitan borough. Over 80 per cent of respondents to our co-ordinators' survey said work experience was organised on this basis. Even then the provision turned out to be heterogeneous within the LEA boundary, *eg* where the Trident Trust worked with some schools but not others. More rarely, the local TEC area, different from the LEA boundary, is the determining factor; about ten per cent of respondents said that this was the basis of their area. In a few areas the unit was even smaller, based around local EBP and/or TVEI consortia boundaries.

There is also no single system of work experience provision. An important factor determining the nature of the provision is the extent to which individual schools take on all the administrative and organisational responsibilities of organising placements themselves, or use an external agency to provide some of the elements.

Generally, schools take responsibility for pre-placement preparation, visiting students while on placements, post-placement debriefing and integration within the curriculum. In some areas

an external agency supports the school, for example by keeping a register of potential places with employers, finding new places, ensuring they meet health and safety requirements. Alternatively the school undertakes these tasks. In other areas the external agency provides further services, *eg* by matching students to available places, confirming the placement with the employer, and helping prepare students for their placement *etc.* Again the alternative is for these activities to be undertaken in school.

Other elements of provision also vary, *eg* the extent to which external agencies offer training and support for the teachers responsible in schools for work experience.

On the basis of the information provided by area co-ordinators we have divided areas into three categories:

- those where the predominant mode is an internal school based *approach* — although schools may work together in consortia for instance to co-ordinate the timing of placements or health and safety visits
- areas where a *centralised approach* is adopted by most schools (*ie* an external agency finds and vets places and matches students to them on the schools' behalf), and
- areas where the schools and an external agency largely work together in a *joint approach*, as illustrated in the following comments from area co-ordinators:

  'Schools offer up self found placements for vetting by the centralised service who provide all the necessary paperwork for HSW monitoring.'

  'The TEC offers a minimal "clearing house" for placements through Compact, plus some centrally produced documentation. Most work falls to schools.'

  'Placements are organised by individual schools, with some central support and guidance in that we hold a central database of work experience providers which is published as a "Register of Hosts" and circulated to all schools. We do not, however, offer a "matching" service.'

In allocating areas to one of these three categories, we have formed a judgement as to what is the *predominant* approach, since in a number of areas there are multiple systems, *eg*:

- with some schools opting for the centralised or joint system and others going it alone, or
- with schools using the central placing agency for some of their placements and topping up that provision with their own placements.

3.1.1 The pattern of provision

As Table 3.1 shows, centralised delivery was the most common form of providing work experience. Of the 110 responses received:

Table 3.1: Types of work experience provision

Type of approach	% of areas
Centralised	52.7
Joint	28.2
School based	19.1
N = 110	

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/6

- fifty-three per cent were judged as predominately using a centralised system
- joint systems were the second largest group, accounting for 28 per cent of areas
- the purely school based system was the least common of the three, being the predominant system in 21 areas out of the 110 which responded (19 per cent). In one of these areas, the co-ordinator pointed out that they were currently looking at establishing a central employer database of 'approved', *ie* health and safety checked, placement providers.

The case studies indicated that our three categories are not hard and fast delineations. In particular, some areas were using the White Paper funding to develop forms of centralised support, particularly with regards the dissemination of checklists and good practice guides, establishing databases of employer placements, and using external agencies to carry out health and safety check.

Using these proportions and the average number of schools in each group, we have estimated the number of schools covered by each type of delivery for the whole of England and Wales. We believe that purely centralised areas cover approximately 45 per cent of the total. Joint systems are estimated to cover 30 per cent proportion of schools. School based systems probably account for 25 per cent.

3.1.2 Timing of placements, by type of provision

Table 3.2 shows timing of placements by type of organisation of work experience. The data are presented both as averages of the proportions co-ordinators stated on the questionnaire (*ie* treating each respondent area equally) and weighted by the number of students in each area (*ie* giving more weight to the areas with more students). Both sets of figures show little variation in the timing of work experience between the different systems. The average proportion of Year 10 pupils going out on work experience was lowest in areas with centralised systems, but this term still accounted for over half of the work experience pupils.

In the case study in one of the school based areas, a disproportionate number of employers were concerned about schools wanting placements at the same times of the year. Conversely, in

Table 3.2: Average proportion of students undertaking work experience, by academic term and type of organisation

	Centralised		Joint		School based	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Summer Year 10	52.3	54.2	58.3	58.2	57.8	57.6
Autumn Year 11	38.5	38.0	31.5	32.3	28.4	32.4
Spring Year 11	7.3	5.4	4.9	5.7	8.1	7.2
Summer Year 11	3.0	2.3	5.4	3.8	3.6	2.7
N =	*51*	*52*	*29*	*28*	*19*	*16*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

one of the more centralised areas we found higher proportions not seeing a problem. However, the association between area and perceived difficulty in timing was not strong.

3.1.3 Length of placements, by type of provision

There was more variation between the different types of organisation of work experience in terms of length of placement. Again, Table 3.3 provides the data both weighted for pupil numbers and unweighted. The table shows that:

- one-week placements were more common in school and joint systems even after the data had been re-weighted to take account of pupil numbers
- that said, around two in three pupils, regardless of the system, go on two-week placements
- centralised systems had the largest proportion taking three-week placements, at around ten per cent — reflecting the influence of the traditional Trident programme.

3.2 Role of external agencies

The most common co-ordinating agency of work experience, according to the area co-ordinators' survey, was the local EBP,

Table 3.3: Average proportion of students undertaking work experience, by length of placement and type of organisation

	Centralised		Joint		School based	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
One week	21.7	28.7	29.9	37.0	32.9	32.6
Two weeks	67.7	61.5	68.4	60.2	64.9	63.8
Three weeks	10.2	9.6	0.5	0.9	1.9	3.1
Other	9.0	0.2	5.1	1.9	2.8	0.5
N =	*55*	*52*	*29*	*28*	*20*	*16*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

Table 3.4: Co-ordinating agencies

Work experience agency	% of areas
EBP	39.6
Trident	36.5
Careers	30.2
LEA	24.0
TVEI	11.5
TEC	10.4
School consortia	6.3
Other	5.2
N = 96	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents could give more than one answer.

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

acting in 40 per cent of areas. Trident was also important, operating in 37 per cent of the responding areas. The Careers Service was involved with work experience in 30 per cent of cases. Details are given in Table 3.4.

3.2.1 Services provided

In terms of the services the agencies provide, respondents were asked to indicate which, from a list of key services, the agency in their area provided. Table 3.5 shows that where a co-ordinated approach was operating, the agency provided all or most of the services listed. There may have been a tendency for respondents to tick all the boxes, and responses may not actually reflect the real situation.

Table 3.5: Services provided by a centralised agency

Services provided	% of respondents ticking option
Operates a computerised database of placements	93.8
Provides a system for health and safety vetting	92.7
Co-ordinates dates to avoid bunching of schools	82.3
Provides for networking/INSET of school co-ordinators	81.3
Supports curriculum development in work experience	80.2
Operates a quality assurance system	78.1
Provides curriculum support material for schools	69.8
Other	17.7
N = 96	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents could give more than one answer.

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

The most commonly provided services, by over 90 per cent of external agencies, was to operate a computerised database of pupil placements and carry out health and safety vetting. Least common was the provision of curriculum support material for the school, although still undertaken in just over two-thirds of cases.

Looking at the services provided by the types of work experience co-ordination, there was little difference between the centralised and joint areas.

In school based areas, where external agencies were not largely involved in the day-to-day organisation of placements, they still generally played a role in terms of providing curriculum support materials, training school co-ordinators and helping to enhance the quality of placement provision. In all the case study areas there was an agency, typically the local EBP, that played this role.

For instance, in one area there was a mix of school based and centralised provision. The local EBP had developed a series of support materials including quality guidelines for work experience, handbooks of practice, student diaries *etc*. We found them in use and highly valued in all the schools visited, regardless of the nature of provision.

Seventeen respondents to the co-ordinators' survey went on to specify other actions the external agency provided. Five co-ordinators said that the agency provided standard documentation for work experience which included accreditation. Three agencies provided health and safety training for teachers, and three said that a central booking system was in place. The remainder covered a whole range of activities from setting up links between employers and schools for work experience preparation, briefing and debriefing services, practice interviews, information about trade unions and providing an award scheme.

3.3 Conclusion

External agencies play three sorts of roles in supporting schools' provision of work experience:

- In nearly all areas they provide, to a greater or lesser extent, **strategic support** — for example by providing guidelines on quality and support with in-school training.
- In most areas, agencies provide what can be seen as **a labour market service** — by finding employers and ensuring they meet health and safety requirements.
- In fewer, but still a majority of, areas, agencies offer schools a **delivery service** — involving both the finding of places and matching students to the places available.

The scene is changing, partly as a result of the impact of White Paper funding, with more involvement by central agencies in the provision of strategic and labour market support.

3.4 Key points

- Work experience provision varies mainly by local education authority area. There are three main approaches to the organisation of work experience:
  - In more than half the country, the predominant approach is centralised, with an external agency finding and vetting places and matching students to the places on the schools' behalf.
  - In just over a quarter of the country, schools mainly adopt a joint approach, with an external agency finding and vetting places, but the school taking responsibility for matching students to places.
  - In the remainder, schools largely organise the whole thing on their own, perhaps with some co-ordination with neighbouring schools.
- There is some minor variation in the length and timing of placements with the nature of provision. Placements are more likely to occur in Year 11 than in Year 10 under centralised systems, and placements tend to be shorter where a school based approach is adopted.
- The most common types of work experience agencies are: Education Business Partnerships; the Trident Trust; Careers Service providers; and Local Education Authorities.
- To varying degrees they offer **strategic support** — *eg* providing guidelines on quality; a **labour market service** — *eg* by finding and checking employers; and a **delivery service** — *eg* finding of places and matching students to the places available.

4. The Main Elements of the Work Experience Process

In this chapter we look at each of the main elements of the provision of work experience.

We look at the key issues involved in:

- finding places: including occupational areas where demand for placements exceeds supply
- health and safety: including the checking of new and existing placements, the use of risk assessment and the training of the people conducting the checks
- matching and selection: including who matches students to places, the criteria used and the degree of choice that students and employers have in the process
- pre-placement preparation: including placement confirmation
- the placement itself: and the in-placement visit by teachers or others
- post-placement activity: including accreditation and curriculum integration.

The key elements of a work experience programme are set out in Figure 4.1.

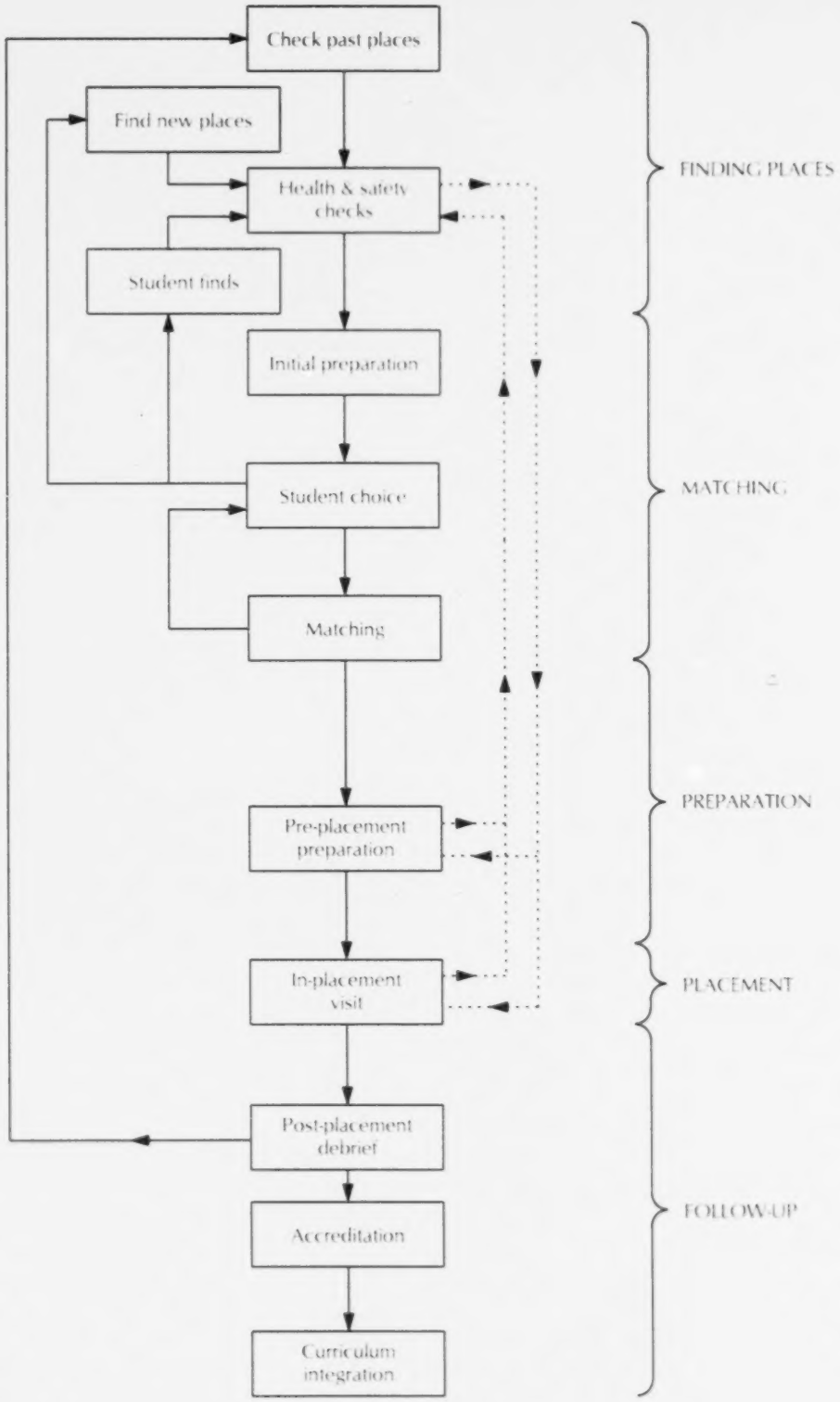
The length of the whole process varies by school. Some start in Year 9 or in the first term of Year 10, preparing students by getting them to think about placement in the context of careers lessons. Initial contact with employers can be over eight months prior to the actual placement. Typically the cycle starts six or seven months prior to the placements, *ie* January for placements towards the end of the summer term of Year 10.

The structure of this chapter follows the process set out in Figure 4.1, from finding places to curriculum integration.

4.1 Finding places

The first stage in the process of organising a round of work experience placements is to draw up a list of possible places. Generally this involves a combination of:

Figure 4.1: The main elements of the work experience process



Source: IES

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- **ensuring that previous places are still available — perhaps by contacting them by letter or telephone, and**
- **adding in new places — either those found opportunistically or systematically in some form of marketing drive, or those found in response to or through specific students' requirements.**

In areas where a central agency provides schools with a list of places, there is usually a computerised database of work experience places. In one of the areas we visited, each participating school had allocated an element of the White Paper funding to the central work experience agency to upgrade their computer software (based on the VERYAN programme) and also to provide a lap-top computer so that agency staff could visit schools and provide an 'on-line' service for filling late placements.

Where the provision is school based, past records may be computer-based or held in manual form. We encountered a wide range of sophistication in the way records were held. Some (often larger) schools were using up to date software and running both student and employer databases. Others were still wedded to manual systems. Several schools we visited were planning to use White Paper funding to invest in a computer system, but were concerned at the additional cost of entering all the current records.

4.1.1 Recruiting new employers

There appeared to be four main ways of drawing new employers into the work experience net:

- student own finds
- parents of students further down the school
- opportunistic cold calling, and
- systematic marketing.

The predominant form was **student own finds** — *ie* where the students themselves had wanted the experience of working with a particular employer or type of employer, and had found the placement themselves or through family and friends. According to the area co-ordinators' survey, some students found their own places in around 60 per cent of areas (see Table 4.5). In some of the case study areas, the school based ones, this was a key element of the system and a way in which students began to develop job search skills and an understanding of the labour market.

However, in all systems there was the flexibility to add in new employers that students found to meet their particular needs. It was also apparent that school based systems, or at least those where the schools did the matching (see below), had the capacity to search out particular placements to meet specific requirements,

eg by searching through the *Yellow Pages* or contacting the local careers service.

Once 'captured', the more effective systems would then ensure that they were given the opportunity to take further placements in subsequent years, and many did.

Secondly, in school based areas, some schools relied heavily on **parents** for places. For example, in one school, parents of children in Years 7 and 8 were asked every year whether they were able to provide placements for Year 10 students.

The third way was through **opportunistic cold calling** — *ie* the work experience co-ordinator, either school or agency based, spotting an employer not involved in their programme and calling in and asking whether they would like to be involved.

More rarely we found examples of more **systematic marketing** — either through cold approaches, *eg* by going through employer directories, or more systematically by following up responses to a mailshot.

In one area we visited, the central agency had tried both marketing approaches and had found the cold approach far more successful than a mailshot, which had produced a very disappointing response. This example highlighted the costs of recruiting employers to a work experience programme and therefore the value of retaining their interest once they have become involved.

We found few examples of schools co-operating to find placements, unless there was a central agency involved with its own database. Although in one area local schools were working in a consortia to develop a mutual database of placements, in others there was almost a competitive spirit between schools, with *'good employers'* being fairly closely shielded from other institutions.

4.1.2 Employer fatigue

Some schools were concerned that education was expecting more and more from employers, with increasing numbers of post-16 placements, perhaps linked to GNVQs, which tended to place even greater demands on employers. Others said that they felt places were becoming more and more difficult to find as employers had less slack in their organisations to accommodate such activities.

> *'The number of employer aborts — ie where employers who have previously said that they would take a student, subsequently cry off — have been rising. It is very worrying. There is just less spare capacity in employers these days and fewer have the time to spare to look after someone even for a couple of weeks.'*

Generally, we found little evidence of fatigue among the employers we interviewed. This may be explained by the nature of the

sample, as our interviewees tended to be favourably disposed towards work experience. They largely took part through a sense of community spirit rather than direct self-interest, *eg* seeking an additional pair of hands. However, other research confirms that few employers are looking to reduce their involvement in activities such as work experience (Hillage *et al.*, 1995).

Despite the growth in demand for work experience placements and the representation of school based systems in our case studies, employers were fairly uncritical of the amount of administration required in setting up and organising work experience. Typically, employers said that it took only a few hours to sort out a work experience placement in advance. Although there was additional time spent supervising the student in the workplace, this too was not considered onerous and often seen as valuable staff training.

Less than one in five employer interviewees stated, when asked directly, that the administration required of them was a problem. Furthermore, only one-third of employers thought they had too many people contacting them about work experience. However, in two of the areas where central systems were in place, employers seemed less likely still to see the level of enquiries and administration as a burden.

One area where respondents did say that they felt that they had less capacity to offer placements than they used to, was in the public sector. Here it was felt that reduced numbers, particularly of supervisory staff, on the one hand and increasing emphasis on productivity and results on the other, meant that there was less scope to get involved with activities not directly related to delivering the designated service.

A number of the employers we spoke to felt that they could take on more students, but at different times of the year. Indeed the concentration of demand in the summer was a problem for some, as it could coincide with periods of peak activity (and therefore less time to spend with the student) or with staff holidays (and therefore present problems of supervision). Employers were also keen to have notice of placements, so that that they could plan for the students' arrival (in terms of supervision and activities), but generally did not want too long a period of notice (*ie* no more than say two months) as they wanted to be sure that they would not be too busy to accommodate the student.

4.1.3 Areas of shortage

There were a number of occupational and sectoral areas where demand seemed regularly to exceed supply. Although there was a tendency for these to vary with the nature of the local employer base (*eg* there tended to be a greater number of

shortages in rural areas), the jobs where there most often appeared to be shortages were:

- veterinary surgeons — and similar placements involving working with animals
- design and media
- information technology — although a number of workplaces could offer placements involving 'working with computers'
- solicitors and other placements involving the law — although both employers and schools pointed out that the scope for variety in such workplaces was limited
- emergency services — police and fire *etc.*
- health — where some employers were concerned about the type of placements they could legitimately offer young, untrained people.

4.1.4 Conclusion

Finding employers willing to offer placements appears to be mainly a combination of self-help (relying on students and parents) and inertia selling (returning to employers who had offered places in the past) rather than systematic marketing. It was therefore not clear whether the employer base used accurately reflected current employment patterns. In particular, schools and agencies appear dependent on the declining numbers of larger employers and public sector employers.

Despite the relatively home-spun approach, lack of employers did not appear to be an overwhelming problem outside particular occupational or geographic (mainly rural) areas. We found little evidence of 'employer fatigue'. Schools generally were able to place all their students, although it could take a considerable amount of high-value teacher time and energy placing the last few. However, there was some concern about the quality, rather than the quantity, of places available.

4.2 Management of health and safety

Our initial interviews with work experience co-ordinators suggested that ensuring placements met health and safety and insurance requirements is becoming a much more central activity in the organisation of work experience. This was confirmed in the case studies, where we also found evidence of the impact of White Paper funding leading to an overhaul of health and safety procedures.

Work experience organisers are expected to take steps to satisfy themselves that the placements they arrange will be safe. Guidance from the DfEE (1995a), Welsh Office (1996), and HSE (1994) suggest that before placements take place a representative

of the school or agency organising the work experience should visit the employer to assess suitability from a health and safety point of view.

Health and safety vetting can present problems for teachers as they generally do not have the time to visit all employers involved in work experience and secondly, they do often not feel adequately qualified to make such assessments. A number of school co-ordinators were very concerned about this aspect of work experience:

> *'I find the health and safety the most worrying aspect [of work experience]. I try to check as many as possible but inevitably focus on a few of the more risky ones. My decisions are ill-informed and I have received only a minimum of training. Basically if it is an office type placement it is given the nod while a manual type placement is followed up, ideally by visit but often only by 'phone.'*

> *'The health and safety bit is an onerous task. It's finding the time to do it. You cannot hope to spend less than an hour — really it takes an afternoon.'*

> *'I feel the whole thing is quite precarious in terms of health and safety. I am not sure whether we are covered properly. I worry about all the potential dangers and breathe a sigh of relief when all the placements have finished without any accidents or problems.'*

> *'Health and safety really is a problem area: we are getting some INSET training but only very basic. The visit forms are being redesigned to do a series of checks and we are trying, in layman's terms, to do a simple check, but all staff are involved in visits and how can you ask these people to inspect for safety, if they then become partly responsible in any future difficulties?'*

> *'I am desperate to see the insurance aspects of work experience and placement security tightened up. I don't understand insurance requirements in particular for small companies, which is key for us as so many kids go to small companies.'*

Other school co-ordinators were concerned that should a test case come to court the insurance arrangements and health and safety checking would *'have holes driven through it by any lawyer'*.

Generally among schools there seemed to be a lack of consistent understanding about what was required in terms of health and safety checks. As a result, some felt that they may be acting over-zealously in vetting placements, while others (as the above quotes illustrate) were concerned that they were not being rigorous enough.

As a result, many agencies co-ordinating work experience undertake health and safety vetting on behalf of schools. Ninety-three per cent of areas, where there was a co-ordinating agency of some sort, were said by respondents to our area co-ordinators' survey to provide a system for health and safety vetting for at least some of the schools in the area.

In some of the schools we visited, where the provision was school based, we were told that local schools were beginning to work together to co-ordinate health and safety visits and ensure that placements used by a number of schools were only visited once within the appropriate timescale. In one area, such co-ordination was being facilitated by the White Paper funding, which was also paying for a local career advisor to undertake some of the pre-placement vetting.

4.2.1 Initial health and safety vetting

Respondents to the co-ordinators' survey were asked whether workplaces providing placements for the first time were checked for health and safety. Table 4.1 shows that in 70 per cent of areas, employers offering work experience for the first time were vetted for health and safety by personal visit. Twenty one per cent of areas said that this initial checking was done by other means — usually by sending out a questionnaire or form. Nine per cent said that checks were not made. Details are given in Table 4.1.

This vetting varied by the type of work experience system operating. Personal health and safety checks were more common in areas with a centralised system, and least common in the school based areas. In one area, the respondent pointed out that placements organised by the LEA/Trident were visited personally but those organised through schools' own schemes were vetted by some other means.

In two school based areas we were told that, although health and safety vetting did not take place, a system was being set up.

There is no significant variation on this, or the other aspects of health and safety, by whether the area was receiving TVEI funding.

4.2.2 Who conducts risk assessments?

In two-thirds of the areas surveyed, the risk assessment of workplaces providing placements was conducted by those responsible for organising work experience (see Table 4.2). Thus, in the majority of cases, this vetting was not being combined

Table 4.1: Initial health and safety checks (per cent)

	Centralised	Joint	School based	All areas
By personal visit	84.0	74.1	30.0	70.1
By other means	14.0	22.2	35.0	20.6
None	2.0	3.7	35.0	9.3
N =	50	27	20	97

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

Table 4.2: Whether risk assessments undertaken by those responsible for organising work experience (per cent)

	Centralised	Joint	School based	All areas
Yes	73.0	68.0	31.6	63.0
No	27.1	28.0	26.3	27.2
Don't know	0.0	4.0	42.1	9.8
N =	48	25	19	92

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

with vetting undertaken by other agencies for other purposes, for example, the local TEC for YT placements.

The proportion of areas where the risk assessment was undertaken by the person responsible for organising work experience was largest in those with a centralised system and smallest in the school based areas. Over 40 per cent of the school based area co-ordinators did not feel able to provide a clear answer for the schools in their area.

In several areas, the risk assessment was left to the employer. The following comments from area co-ordinators were typical:

> *'The person responsible for organising work experience does not undertake risk assessments but employers are asked to confirm that they undertake assessments themselves.'*

> *'The person responsible undertakes health and safety vetting but risk assessment is the responsibility of the employer.'*

Finally, there were several respondents who said that, although the person responsible was not vetting placements as yet, this was being considered, or was about to be introduced.

4.2.3 Re-assessment of work experience placements

Once initial health and safety checks are undertaken for employers offering placements for the first time, there is the need for regular re-assessment of those continuing to take part. In the majority of cases (62 per cent), under half of the participating workplaces were checked each year. In one-third of the areas surveyed, this was done for half or more, and in six cases, all workplaces were checked. There were only five areas where no checks were carried out at all. Details are given in Table 4.3.

There was little variation between centralised and school based systems but a higher proportion of areas operating a joint system reported that all or most workplaces were checked each year.

Some co-ordinators went on to specify how this was done. In one case, the respondent wrote that all workplaces were checked every three years, whilst another said they had a rolling

Table 4.3: Proportion of areas re-assessing workplaces for health and safety (per cent)

Proportion of employers	Centralised	Joint	School based	All areas
All	4.3	11.5	5.0	6.5
Most (half or more)	23.9	30.8	25.0	26.1
Some (under half)	65.2	53.8	65.0	62.0
None	6.5	3.8	5.0	5.4
N =	*46*	*26*	*20*	*92*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

programme of vetting. In one area, all workplaces were checked each year by:

> *'Completion of a form sent through the post then visited every few years.'*

The proportion vetted each year could also depend on the degree of risk:

> *'Under the terms of our contract, all placements which have the "highest risk" potential are visited annually. Others with lower risk potential are visited every other year.'*

> *'One-third per year plus all high risk placements to be visited every year.'*

We found similar systems operating in the case study areas. For example, one had recently introduced a system whereby workplaces considered to be high risk were supposed to be visited every 14 months, those of medium risk every two years, and low risk places every three years. Another had employed the services of a health and safety consultant and introduced a similar system, visiting high risk workplaces every year. In both cases the assessment was a paper exercise based on the occupational category of the placement.

However, it was not clear that all placements were checked in accordance with the system. In school based areas, health and safety checking appeared (on the basis of the schools we visited) to be more haphazard and often based on telephone calls with the employer or left to the teacher who visited the student on the placement.

4.2.4 Training

Co-ordinators were asked what training in health and safety was given to those responsible for vetting employers' premises. Unfortunately, the most common response was 'various sources', which does not tell us a great deal. After that, LEA or Trident courses were used, reflecting the large proportion of areas where these agencies are involved in the co-ordination of work experience.

Table 4.4: Training received by those responsible for health and safety vetting

Type of training	% of areas
Various sources	21.8
LEA training course	17.2
Trident Trust	16.1
NEBOSH certificate	11.5
TEC training course	9.2
IOSH	6.9
INSET	6.9
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	6.9
Careers Service	5.7
ROSPA	4.6
Internal training from specialist staff	3.4
EBP	2.3
TEED/ED	2.3
Other	7.7
None	11.5
N = 87	

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

A whole range of other training sources were also listed and these are detailed in Table 4.4. Interestingly, ten per cent of co-ordinators said that no training was provided. These were not concentrated in any particular form of work experience co-ordination but evenly spread across centralised, school based, hybrid and multiple systems areas. It is not practical to break the responses down any further, because the numbers concerned are too small.

The amount of training individuals had received seemed to vary enormously. The following examples illustrate this point:

> *'All places are vetted by the central placement organiser who undertook a nine day TUC course, has received additional training by health and safety consultants, and attends regular updating courses run by local authority (four days per year).'*

> *'One day course on health and safety.'*

> *'General awareness reading.'*

There were some co-ordinators, however, who did not feel they required much training because of their previous careers. As one co-ordinator explained:

> *'The current post holder has had 32 years' experience in production management in the steel industry which included a strong emphasis on health and safety issues. Has also attended a short refresher course validated by the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.'*

In another area, work experience co-ordinators were all offered a one-day health and safety awareness course from an independent organisation. Despite this, the co-ordinator said that they were not qualified to make a risk assessment and so this had to be done by another agency.

From the case studies it was clear that a wide range of people with varying degrees of training were conducting health and safety checks. In one organisation, heavily involved in delivering work experience placements, we were told that:

> *'Few of us are health and safety experts. We have a general knowledge and appreciation of the basics. By and large we act in* loco parentis *and view the place as prudent people thinking: would I be happy for my child to come here?'*

4.2.5 Employers' views

Few employers seemed concerned about the health and safety aspects of work experience. There were several comments that health and safety checks through work experience were so brief and superficial that they never covered as much as would be checked through the normal inspection process anyway. In the larger organisations it was just seen as part of the normal process of health and safety checking and risk assessment. Typical comments included:

> *'Young people are no different to any other employee, all processes have a COSHH assessment.'*

> *'This year we actually had a visit from the careers service. It was the first time this has happened in the three years I have run it. We always get a letter of understanding and a form to fill in about insurance. We obviously get the usual health and safety checks, but nothing about work experience before.'*

> *'Because we have large numbers of the public in the building, we have all the usual health, safety and environmental checks, but nothing specifically to do with work experience. Occasionally schools send us a form about insurance to fill out. Frankly, we find it a bit insulting.'*

4.2.6 Impact of White Paper funding

The funding made available through the White Paper has been used in many areas to improve the health and safety procedures.

For example, in one of our case study areas, schools relied very heavily on their employers being on the careers service list and so were known to have been checked at some point in the last three years. The careers service had also improved their service to schools with the help of White Paper funding for work experience in two ways:

- Firstly the money funded a person to work full time doing health and safety checks. If a school had a placement that had not been checked before, it usually asked the careers service

to do it for them, and then adds them to the list. This had taken much of the burden from the schools.

- Careers services also offered training courses in health and safety, again with White Paper funding, so that in-school work experience co-ordinators could do the checks if required. Most co-ordinators had been on this course. They found it useful because even though the careers service would normally conduct the checks, if they were organising a placement at the last minute, they would be qualified to check it themselves.

The involvement of the careers service was felt to be the most practical way to cover the health and safety issue, since they were visiting employers anyway about YT and modern apprenticeships *etc.*

When the TEC money became available, the TEC and careers service health and safety officers jointly developed a system of working and risk banding. For example, placements in sectors like engineering and construction, where there is thought to be potentially more risk, are to be checked first and will be reviewed every year. Those on a lower risk band will only be checked every two years.

Another case study area had recently had a big push on health and safety. This was initiated by the TEC, who used the White Paper funding as a lever to be accepted as a key player in work experience by the other partners. They used an IOSH trained consultant (who risk assessed TEC training providers) to band placements into low, medium, high risk, according to standard occupational classifications. Checks now take place every three years for low risk placements, every two years for medium and every year for high risk. In addition a letter of understanding was sent to and signed by employers every year. Our interviewee from the TEC felt that they now had an effective system:

> *'Health and safety has been done to death'. We have got it covered. This is the main reason why grant maintained schools are willing to make up the costs of placements.'*

4.2.7 Conclusion

The health and safety aspects of work experience had been the focus of much attention in recent years and it was clear that in many areas processes were being reviewed and improved through the stimulus of the White Paper funding.

However, there are still areas of concern associated with the expertise of the people conducting the checks and whether they were appropriately trained to both conduct proper assessments, and also not over-play the issue.

Health and safety appeared to be a particular concern in school based areas. Schools were concerned that they did not have the time or training to do the task properly and, in places, lacked

information on what they should be doing if they did have the resources. This was confirmed by employers who rarely reported regular visits. One of the issues here is the cost-effectiveness of asking high-value teachers to conduct a role outside their normal area of expertise. This was one area where central agencies, more familiar with the issues involved, seemed to provide an efficient service, especially where they use systems already set up for careers service vacancies or youth training.

4.3 Initial preparation

The first that students will hear formally about work experience is likely to be in (Personal and Social Education) lessons towards the end of Year 9, perhaps within the context of making GCSE choices, or at the beginning of Year 10. Parents also tend to be informed at this stage, either by letter (seeking permission) or in a meeting.

> *'Firstly we will have a parents evening where we tell them about the process of work experience and what we are planning to do. We get them all in and run through the paper work that will be involved. We go through how we get a placement and how the follow up arrangements are made. The parents need to understand the steps to be made. We show them the diary etc. At the parents evening we often get people coming up and saying my company will be able to offer x number of placements.'*

Further preparation then takes place during Year 10 in PSE and/or careers lessons.

> *'The careers module in PSE ties in with work experience. This includes sessions on decision making. They do a module where they go to the careers library and research certain jobs.'*

Schools tended to organise a block of lessons for half a term, or a whole term in some cases, devoted to preparation for work experience, the timing of which will depend on the timing of the placements. Topics include:

- how to write CVs
- how to do job applications
- writing letters
- using the telephone
- interview techniques
- health and safety awareness
- researching occupations and job families
- projects on working life
- and occasionally more complex themes, for example:

> *'We start off by completing some work sheets in Year 10. These go into what am I like?, what do I like doing? It is about them knowing themselves, eg looking at what activities they enjoy most. They then*

do the signpost box. They have pairs of statements and it leads them into specific potential areas of work. For example, their interests and answers to the pairs may suggest outdoor work and it will give examples of jobs involving working outdoors. They then use the KUDOS programme on the computer. They gives details of their likely qualifications and their interests etc. and it should come up with a list of jobs they should have an interest in doing. Whatever comes up on KUDOS, we ask them to make a choice for work experience.

4.4 Matching and selection

The matching and selection process is a crucial element of a successful placement. The evidence from employers, schools and students themselves all point to the importance of ensuring that students go on appropriate placements. As one school co-ordinator put it:

'The key is matching what the students interests are. If you do not do that, they will not find it interesting. They have got to be interested in the job. If they do not enjoy what they are doing it comes across to the employer. Some kids are very good practically and some are academic. Some can work with people, others cannot. You have to think about where they are going to work and their abilities. It is about where they are going to be interested.'

Employers are very much of the opinion that students must be interested in the type of work in which they are involved. Nearly all felt that the student must be interested in the type of work they did.

'It has to be a placement they want to do. If they are not interested they will not take everything in.'

Matching processes vary considerably around the country. The key parameters of the variation are:

- the extent to which external agencies are responsible for matching students to places
- the criteria used by students to select placements and by co-ordinators to match students to places
- the degree of choice offered to students when the match is made external to the school
- the extent to which matching is done by hand or by computer
- the degree of employer involvement in the process and whether employers select students or mainly receive the students allocated to them.

The rest of this section examines these points in more detail.

4.4.1 Responsibility for matching

Work experience co-ordinators were asked to indicate who was responsible for matching students with the placements on offer. The answer partly depends on the system adopted in the area,

Table 4.5: Person responsible for matching students with available placements

Person responsible for matching	% of areas*
Careers teacher/in-school work experience co-ordinator	82.1
Students**	61.1
Year teacher/tutor	56.8
External agency co-ordinator	47.4
PSE teacher	32.6
Other person	5.3
N = 95	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents could give more than one answer.

** (ie some students find their own placements)

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

with, by definition, no involvement of external agencies in school based areas. Table 4.5 shows that the most common option (in 82 per cent of cases) was for the careers teacher or the in-school work experience co-ordinator to be responsible for matching. Just under two-thirds of co-ordinators said that some students found their own placements, and 57 per cent said the year teacher was responsible.

In all school based systems, matching was reported to be the responsibility of the careers teacher or in-school work experience co-ordinator, with over two-thirds also stating that some students found their own placements. There were no areas where the student was said to be the only person responsible for matching placements. If students were involved, this was always in combination with one or more of the teachers listed, or the agency co-ordinator.

However, in one of the schools we visited, the students were largely left to find their own places and we were told:

> *'If the kids really want to do it, they will definitely sort it out. The kids here have a lot of confidence. They know what they want to do. If they are interested in engineering they will look through the files and see what is needed and which companies do it.'*

In this instance the work experience programme was fairly well monitored and seemed to work. The TEC and careers service were very concerned about the increasing number of schools in the area leaving it up to the students to find their own placements. It was felt that this was happening more and more because of the pressures on teachers' time. The concern was that if students organise their own placements, there will be little attention to core skills, and the quality of placement will suffer if there was less preparation with employers. On the other hand, some employers liked students to organise their own placements as they felt it showed a degree of motivation and interest. An interviewee from a farm said:

'the best ones are those that sort themselves out, it shows they are motivated, want to work in this type of setting and have an interest in animals, which is essential.'

Even if the school tried to sort out a placement, the farmer asked to have an application from the student direct. The interviewee wanted to see that the student was motivated.

In the main, schools seemed very protective of the matching element of the process, believing that knowledge of the student, their interests and abilities, was essential. Perhaps even more important was consideration of the 'softer' aspects of matching students to 'appropriate' placements. There seemed to be a number of reasons for this:

- At a general level, the school and teachers are the only people who know the student sufficiently well to match career aspirations, capabilities, interests and personal characteristics with the placement — 'the subtleties of communication between teacher and student'.
- Some students are thought unable to cope in certain environments, some placements require certain dress codes that not all students would want, or be able, to pay for.
- The school is ultimately responsible for the student and so wants to ensure that they are happy with the 'match'.
- The school wanted to avoid jeopardising employer relations for future years. Some schools saw work experience as a form of public relations and they wanted to make sure that students were not 'ruining the good name of the school'.

The advantage of a central agency, such as Trident, looking after the matching process was that it eased the burden on employers of being contacted by schools. Some central agencies also argued that being at arms length provided a bit more objectivity in matching students to placements. The agency had no preconceived ideas about individuals as the process was based on the information provided by the student/school and the agency's knowledge of the placement.

In one area, school co-ordinators seemed to work quite closely with the central agency and spend time going through the forms together. One school commented that their agency was very closely involved and supportive in the matching process, commenting that *'it's almost as if they know the students'*.

However, in others the relationship between schools and the agency was more remote and, perhaps as a result, the process was a bit more hit and miss.

4.4.2 Criteria used

The criteria used to match placements are obviously an important element of ensuring that a placement is successful. In the survey,

Table 4.6: Criteria used to match individual students and placements

Criteria used	% of areas
Student's desire to taste particular careers	93.6
Choice of specific company(ies)	61.7
Careers guidance given	58.5
Project and/or assignment work	40.4
Core skills student wishes to develop	38.3
Previous work experience	25.5
Other	13.8
Don't know	1.1
N = 94	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents could give more than one answer.

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

area co-ordinators were provided with a list of potential criteria and asked to indicate which were used to match individual students and placements and to list others which were not included. Details are given in Table 4.6.

Nearly all respondents (94 per cent) said that the student's desire to taste particular careers was taken into account. Just under two-thirds said that the choice of specific companies was also considered, whilst nearly 60 per cent said that any careers guidance given was also a criterion used. Least often used, in only a quarter of areas, was the student's previous work experience.

The core skills the student wished to develop and their project or assignment work were only used in around 40 per cent of areas.

Other criteria used included: the tutor's view of suitability; parental influence; the personal qualities and aptitudes of the student; the student's health and the student's willingness to travel.

The case studies indicated that schools were keen to ensure that student career interests were being met. However, this was not always straightforward. For example, in one area a large high profile motor vehicle manufacturer dominated students' interests and matching their first choice would be near impossible. In others, fashionable retailers (*eg* sportswear shops) were the dominant choice. Matching can be problematic in these circumstances, when placement ideas have become distorted and lack coherence.

Although most schools saw the overall objectives as wider than merely career tasting, this factor was undoubtedly the main focus of the matching process. Schools were sensitive to the requirements of employers for students that are interested in the area of work they enter on placement.

For one school the needs were more simple:

> *'for our kids their big aspiration when they leave school is to get a job, this must always be remembered in how we and the kids treat work experience.'*

So, for this co-ordinator the main driving force was to match what the student wants with a placement that might realistically be a job application in a year's time and relate to job ambitions. The placement served the purpose of confirming a career idea or putting the student off.

There seemed to be a slightly different approach to matching where students who were likely to go on to higher education were concerned. Here it seemed to be more a case of 'work' tasting rather than 'career' or 'occupational' tasting. The difference being that the student need not be so interested in the career but want to experience the world of work more generally. Interest might come from a source other than career intentions. This is not to say that the objectives for work experience differ between students from the schools' perspective but the rationale from the student might be slightly different.

There were one or two comments about the use of part-time work. Those who have access to part-time work have already been exposed to the realities of working life, so more focus could be put on careers related issues for these students. A careers service representative felt that more consideration could be built into the matching process that takes account of the different starting points of young people, in terms of their experience of work.

The importance of career aspirations underpinning the choice of placement is supported by the students' survey, where over three-quarters of respondents (77 per cent) indicated 'interest in the career' as a reason for choosing the placement. The data are summarised by case study area in Table 4.7.

It was noticeable that girls were more likely to cite 'interest in the career' than boys (78 per cent compared to 68 per cent). This difference remains statistically significant when looking within case study areas.

Table 4.7: Reasons for selecting placement by case study area (per cent)

	Case Study Area						
Reason	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**All Students**
Interest in career	74.2	68.0	77.3	74.5	66.4	80.3	76.7
Help decide courses	25.3	26.0	26.6	21.0	28.0	33.3	26.2
Parents suggestion	10.4	5.6	7.2	7.5	4.8	9.1	7.4
Already knew employer	18.1	17.7	14.0	16.0	11.2	4.5	14.4
Base N =	*182*	*231*	*207*	*200*	*125*	*132*	*1,077*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

Around one in four students thought that their placement would help them decide what courses to take in the future. Parental involvement was variable, but there was little consistent difference between school based areas and centralised ones. It is interesting to note that in Case Study A where a more centralised system operates there is a fairly high degree of student and parental involvement. One or two schools in this area pointed out that they had to ask students and parents to find placements because the central system is being developed and had insufficient placements. It is possible that this factor is coming through in the data.

Generally parental involvement was higher for those students going on to sixth form than those looking to enter FE or the labour market. This relationship with educational aspirations is likely to be the product of the more fundamental influence of social class.

Other factors cited by students included more general reasoning, for example, *'thought it would be enjoyable'* or *'a good experience'* and other more practical issues such as *'it was close to home'*, or *'it was one of the only places available'*.

4.4.3 Degree of choice of placements

There are broadly three ways in which students choose placements. The first involves selecting from a list of named places available, generally categorised by broad occupational area. The list may include further information about the placement, such as a job description and, in a few schools, a little report from previous students who had taken the placement. One school set up a simulated job centre with noticeboards advertising placements. Student had to fill in application forms and take part in mock interviews.

The second involves making a selection of a number (typically three, four or six) of broad occupational or sectoral areas and relying on the work experience co-ordinator to make the final match. This is often the method used in externally based centralised systems. The third method is where students find their own placements.

The co-ordinators' survey found that student choice of placement was very widespread throughout all work experience programmes. Ninety-seven per cent of co-ordinators said that students were offered a choice of placement. The other three per cent said they did not know.

The degree of choice, however, did vary. Students were given a free choice of placements in 38 per cent of work experience areas, and for the remaining 62 per cent, this choice was restricted. Free choice was reported to be least common in areas operating a school based system and most common in those with a centralised form of organising work experience (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Degree of student choice (per cent)

	Centralised	Joint	School based	All areas
Free choice	46.8	40.9	15.0	38.2
Restricted choice	53.2	59.1	85.0	61.8
N =	*47*	*22*	*20*	*89*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

Some co-ordinators added caveats about how free this choice actually was. For example:

'It's a free choice but obviously it depends on what is available.'

'Students can request specific placements but there is no guarantee that they will get it. A lot do. A free choice frequently means unrealistic choice.'

Where student choice was restricted, co-ordinators were asked to explain in what way this was restricted. Only 50 co-ordinators provided details and these are given in Table 4.9. A quarter of respondents said that the choice was restricted by the availability of placements. The following are typical:

'Many schools send students out on the same dates, which restricts choice.'

'Choice is restricted only by numbers of placements available that fit students' criteria.'

Slightly more indicated that students were allowed to choose from three or four occupational areas or placements. For example:

'Students are required to select a category of work. The agency then allocates a placement from within the category.'

'They usually have a 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice of "vocational" areas but it is about social skills etc. So vocation is not a prime consideration.'

Table 4.9: How student choice is restricted

Form of restriction	% of areas
Choice of three/four areas/placements	28.0
Depends on places available	24.0
Depends on schools	20.0
Relevance of placement	6.0
Agreed with teacher	6.0
From within chosen category	4.0
From within career area	4.0
Other	8.0
N = 50	

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

Table 4.10: Choice of placement by case study area (per cent)

Choice of placement	Case Study Area A	B	C	D	E	F	All Students
Yes	89.2	94.6	84.8	90.5	89.2	70.1	86.7
No	10.8	5.4	15.2	9.5	10.8	29.9	13.3
Base N =	*204*	*242*	*243*	*221*	*139*	*187*	*1,236*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

One-fifth simply said that choice depended on the schools. Other restrictions included health and safety considerations and the cost of travel.

Finally, there were co-ordinators who said that a number of restrictions applied:

> *'The guidance process ensures that, although the student makes the final decision, choices are restricted by a range of factors, such as the employer's requirements, matching restraints.'*

> *'Students usually choose a job type (eg caring, office) after discussions in careers, PSE, and then may choose or be matched by the teacher. Some may have to rethink if it is a popular area and there are not enough places.'*

The special school we visited matched students to places very carefully. It also ensured that employers were well prepared and had clear and realistic expectations of the individuals. Students never went to a placement with which they were not completely happy.

Students' views

A very high proportion of young people covered in the survey said that they were able to choose their own placement — 86.7 per cent. This varied by area but not to the extent that it was possible to draw firm conclusions with regard to the means of work experience co-ordination. The two areas with highest proportions indicating they were able to choose their own placement operated school based systems of co-ordination. The area where the lowest proportion reported that they had a choice (Case study F) was a mixed area, where one of the schools took part in a centralised system, while in the other four the provision was school based.

Students were also asked whether, if they had their time again, they would choose a different placement. Those who had indicated that they were able to choose their own placement were significantly less likely to wish they had undertaken a different one. The figures vary only marginally by area and there seems little association with the type of system in place.

Table 4.11: Process of placement selection by case study area (per cent)

Selection process	Case Study Area						All Students
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
From a computer	21	5	3	9	71	6	17
From a list in a book	1	10	10	4	15	24	11
From the family	42	43	29	32	8	20	34
Given to me	24	26	42	38	7	47	35
From an outside person	14	12	8	8	4	2	10
From the job centre	0	1	7	1	1	1	2
Base N =	*202*	*241*	*237*	*216*	*139*	*182*	*1,218*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

Students were asked whether the placement they received was their first choice. Two-thirds indicated that it was. It was noticeable, though, that in case study E where a central system was in operation, lower proportions received their first choice placement while in B, C and D — more school based systems — higher proportions received their first choice.

The most highly centralised system (Case Study E, where the matching was made externally to the school) had the lowest proportion indicating they were 'given' a placement by their school. This appears to contradict the message from the interviews, where it was felt students and schools needed to be closely involved in the matching and placing if the students were not to feel placed with an employer against their wishes.

The data from Case Study A demonstrates a mix of methods to place students used by schools — both tapping in to the central system but also using parents and school contacts as well to make up the numbers.

4.4.4 Employer selection of students

Co-ordinators were also asked whether employers had the opportunity to select their work experience students. The survey found that in 78 per cent of areas, employers were sometimes involved in selecting students for work experience. Just over one-third of co-ordinators said that employers had the opportunity to select students in most or all cases. However, 43 per cent said that this only happened in some or a few cases and 23 per cent said employers were not involved.

In some cases, however, comments added to the questionnaire by co-ordinators indicated that although employers could reject students at the pre-placement interview, they did not really take the opportunity to select their work experience students. The following quotes illustrate this point:

'Many pre-placement interviews take place — few, if any, result in refusals.'

'There is an interview process but we do not allow a selection from several candidates.'

In many cases students visit employers before placement but generally this is not a formal interview. Some interviewees suggested that the numbers of employers wanting to see students before their placement was rising. However, we found little evidence among employers that they wanted to exercise greater discretion in the choice of student. Less than one in five of those we interviewed saw the pre-placement interview as an opportunity to assess the suitability of the student. They were more interested in finding out about the young person prior to the placement and talk to them about what they would be doing (see section 4.5).

Some employers, particularly those operating in a specialised field, like students to have an interest in the work. This was the case in a laboratory testing company where we were told:

'It is very important the young people have a scientific bias, the placement is only suitable for certain types of students, those going on to do science 'A' levels or are interested in food and nutrition; we generally get those who want to be here.'

Similarly, one of the banks we visited stipulated that students should have some kind of interest in banking.

There was some concern that the pre-placement interview was handled with care. One interviewee from a careers service argued:

'If the point is to give kids confidence, turning them down after interview has to be handled very carefully.'

One school visited had had two students turned down as a result of an interview this year. The teacher we interviewed said that employers were becoming more selective. This was felt to be a good thing as it showed that employers were making the work experience more like the real world for the students.

The students' survey, however, suggests that employer selection was more widespread than the other evidence had led us to conclude. Just over 16 per cent of all students said they had been turned down by an employer in the process of finding a placement. These were not generally students who had found their own placements. Those who had been able to choose their own placement were less likely to have been turned down, perhaps suggesting a better degree of matching taking place when students 'feel' they have an input in the selection process. Some 22 per cent of those who were not able to choose their own placement were turned down by employers, while only 15 per cent of those who had chosen placements were turned down.

4.4.5 The matching process

A number of co-ordinators, both school and agency based, commented on the complexity of the matching process.

> *'The booking of placements can be an incredibly long-winded affair. Forms come backwards and forwards if a student's six choices are not available. It's like a chain when selling a house. If anything goes wrong, the whole thing collapses.'*

In both central and school based systems, the matching process appeared to take months to complete. One school which used a central placing agency said it took two months between students sending in their forms and being told what placement they had (or whether none of their choices were available). Although many students did have places within the first few weeks of the process, some (less than ten per cent) only had their placement sorted out days (hours in extreme cases) before it was due to start.

4.4.6 Late placements

There were a number of reasons why a few students did not secure placements until the last minute including:

- the student did not know what they wanted to do,
- the student had made a narrow range of popular choices and had not been allocated any of them
- the student had secured a place, but the employer was not able to provide it at the last minute.

> *'We also have the problems of bright kids who do not want to go out because they do not want to miss school. Then we have low achievers who do not want to go out because of confidence, and to be honest we are not going to match them with jobs anyway. We also have some that even if you find them placements, they just do not turn up. They can be very insecure and start to worry. They can be macho in class but then really worry about it when they are nearly there.'*

> *'We judge placing on what they want to do. If you put kids somewhere they do not want to go, they will not do the job justice. Some do at the end because they are in the last dozen and we are having to place in what there is left. We try to say to them there are always some things you have to do whether you like it or not.'*

The central agency in one of the areas we visited told us that they reckoned to provide 70 per cent of students with their first or second choice placement. This percentage fell in the summer months to 60 per cent when a number of schools went out and the competition for popular placements intensified.

One school estimated that only about 50 or 60 out of the 240 in the year got their first choice of placement. Another school gave the example of a student putting in their six choices and then having to reselect continually, eventually getting their 36th choice, which turned out to be an excellent placement, although

it was not in an occupational area they had originally wanted. This was a very academic student going for professional type placements, who eventually got a placement in a newsagent, and found a paper round job out of it.

The problem of late placements not only affected the student and minimised the chances they had to prepare. It also impacted on employers who did not like students turning up unannounced on the day of the placement as they too had had no time to prepare.

4.4.7 The importance of student choice

It was mentioned by several interviewees that student 'ownership' of the process of placement selection leads to higher levels of satisfaction with choice of placement. The data from the students' survey appeared to confirm this proposition.

Students who had chosen their placement, and those where they had gone on their first choice placement, were significantly happier with their experience than the others. In their questionnaire, students were asked to say whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they were happy with their placement. Table 4.12 sets out the responses, by whether they had a choice of placement and whether they obtained their first choice.

Over 50 per cent of those who had a choice strongly agreed that overall they were happy with their placement, compared with 42 per cent of those who did not have a choice. Similarly, 57 per cent of those who obtained their first choice placement strongly agreed that they were happy with it, compared with only 41 per cent who did not get their first choice.

4.4.8 Conclusions

Our research suggests that work experience is generally seen as a career orientated activity, and that core skills (and indeed any other specific learning outcomes) are less important considerations in matching students to places.

Table 4.12: Satisfaction with placement and placement choice (per cent)

Overall I was happy with my placement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base N =
Chose placement – Yes	53	33	7	4	3	1,059
– No	42	32	10	10	6	160
First choice – Yes	57	33	6	3	2	748
– No	41	36	10	7	6	306
All students	*51*	*34*	*7*	*5*	*3*	*1,223*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

The most important factor was that students 'fitted' the placement, based around criteria such as interest, ability, suitability and practicality. Employers were particularly keen that students displayed an interest in their work area and were motivated to attend. They do not generally choose students for placements, although there were some suggestions that employer selection was rising.

Generally students were pleased with their placement. Students who were involved in choosing their placement, especially those who obtained their first choice, were generally happier with their placement than those who did not.

The matching process took considerable time, but despite the effort involved, schools seemed to think it ran smoother when they were in control of the process than when it was handled by an outside agency.

4.5 Pre-placement preparation

In-school preparation tends to become more focused and intensive as the placement nears. Topics covered include health and safety, behaviour *etc.*, and other issues not covered in earlier preparation lessons (see section 4.3).

The discussion and development of specific learning objectives for the student from their placement was less often covered in pre-placement preparation. In the co-ordinators' survey, only half the respondents said that learning objectives were identified in most or all of the schools in their area.

In most of the schools we visited where objectives were set, they tended to be of a general nature, *eg* 'discover skills talents and preferences' or 'Develop skills and understanding in jobs and outside work'. A few did set out core skills (*eg* communication, problem solving, personal skills, information technology and numeracy) that could be developed on the placement, in student diaries and workbooks, and some provided checklists for students to note down when these skills were used.

In nearly all the schools we visited, students were encouraged to undertake the final organisation of the placement themselves. This might involve introducing themselves by letter or telephone to their placement host, setting up a brief interview prior to the placement, sorting out times of work, dress, how to get there *etc*. Some schools placed a premium on this element of the preparation, and saw it as a very important development process for the students.

The vast majority of employers we interviewed had met their students prior to the placement — usually at the school's or student's initiative. The main purpose of these meetings from the employers' point of view seemed to be to determine the level

of interest in the type of work, establish interests in order to focus placement activities, and to act as a form of introduction to explain the practicalities: hours, dress and what can be expected from the placement.

> *'Originally we used to take people on the school's say so, but now some departments are asking to see the child first. They have to arrange the interview themselves so they have to make a commitment. It will make them better prepared. They know where they have to go, what to wear, what time to get there, who they will be working with etc.'*

> *'We would prefer to meet the youngster before the placement, perhaps together with their teacher, so we can discuss what they want to do, plan activities better and agree aims and objectives.'*

Three-quarters of students surveyed said they had discussed the details and purpose of work experience prior to embarking on it.

Of those who had discussed details, 42 per cent had talked to someone from the employer, 36 per cent had discussed it with a careers teacher and 36 per cent with a PSE teacher — a further 19 per cent had talked with another teacher.

There was some variation between case study areas in the proportions discussing the placement and with whom the discussion took place. Where discussions took place, they generally appeared to cover the same issues. The area where there appeared to be least pre-placement discussion was the one with

Table 4.13: Discussion prior to placement with whom and details by case study area (per cent)

	Case Study Area						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	All Students
Discussed placement percentage 'Yes' (n =)	75 (203)	69 (244)	80 (242)	81 (218)	60 (138)	82 (186)	76 (1,231)
With whom . . .							
Someone from employer	37	46	30	42	37	46	39
Careers teacher	58	24	28	46	28	20	34
PSE teacher	22	22	29	43	31	55	34
Another teacher	3	21	35	8	25	16	18
Contents of discussion							
Getting there	45	47	50	44	35	53	47
Placement objectives	57	53	42	52	33	60	50
Dress and behaviour	78	70	75	73	62	79	73
Completing diary	41	40	37	31	42	39	38
Completing assignments	10	5	12	18	9	21	13
Relevance of placement to school studies	30	27	25	29	31	34	29
Base N =	*149*	*169*	*193*	*173*	*82*	*154*	*920*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

the most centralised system (Case Study E) and where we were told by the area co-ordinator that around 80 per cent of students visited employers before the placement started.

The explanation for this apparent contradiction lies in the different perspectives of the two sets of respondents. Area co-ordinators are likely to have a view of what should happen, while students respond about what actually happened. There may also be a difference in interpretation of events, for example students may not have thought of whole class preparation as 'discussion'. Nevertheless it does point to the importance of taking into account views from different perspectives, rather than relying on a single source.

In their survey, students were also asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with two statements: *'I did not understand the point of my placement before I went'* and *'there was not enough preparation before my placement began'*. Table 4.14 compares those who had pre-placement discussions with those who had not.

Overall, there was a very positive response from students as to the preparation they received from their schools and employers. Just eight per cent indicated that they did not understand their placement, and 16 per cent felt they were poorly prepared. There was some variation in attitude between the case study areas, but the main determining factor was whether or not they had discussed their placement prior to embarking on it (Table 4.14).

The only other factor that showed some significant variation was between boys and girls — in general boys felt less well prepared than girls. This was despite broadly equal proportions discussing the details of their placement as part of the preparation.

4.6 Placements

There was an enormous variety of employers involved in providing work experience. A flavour of the range of placements

Table 4.14: Pre-placement preparation by case study area (per cent)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Base N =
I did not understand the point of my placement before						
Discussed details – Yes	2.2	5.2	9.8	41.5	41.3	922
Discussed details – No	3.8	16.3	17.7	35.2	36.9	293
There was not enough preparation						
Discussed details – Yes	2.0	12.1	17.9	46.0	22.0	921
Discussed details – No	3.8	16.3	25.3	37.4	17.3	289

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

Table 4.15: Distribution of work experience employer, by gender

	Girls %	Boys %	Base N =
Legal and media	60.9	39.1	115
Public sector	48.0	52.0	75
Banks/office	49.6	50.4	139
Education	83.0	17.0	224
Production	18.3	81.7	208
Health	82.3	17.7	96
Retail	52.1	47.9	309
All	*54.8*	*45.2*	*1,166*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

was gained from the students' survey. We have grouped the placements into seven areas. The groups are as follows:

- **Legal and media** — this group included solicitors, accountants, surveyors, design studios, research labs, newspapers and theatres.
- **Public sector** — including local government, the emergency services and armed forces, charitable organisations and public places (*ie* libraries and museums).
- **Banks/offices** — banks, insurance companies, building societies and general office environments.
- **Education** — schools, nurseries, FE colleges and dance schools.
- **Production** — utilities, engineering, manufacturing, transport, printing, building, construction and semi-skilled occupations, plus agriculture.
- **Health** — doctors' surgeries, vets, nursing homes and hospitals.
- **Retail** — all shops, high street outlets (excluding banks) post offices, opticians, chemists, estate agents *etc.*

4.6.1 Type of employer

The data are presented in Table 4.15 to show the distribution of work experience for boys and girls. Numerous schools discussed occupational stereotyping but felt that much of the time there was little they could do to avoid it. We found little evidence of active monitoring on equal opportunities, despite the attention given to this issue in the Department's Guide to Schools (DFE, 1995a).

Retail and engineering are the two largest groups of employer providing work experience. Girls' placements are concentrated particularly in the health and education sectors, while boys tend to be most over-represented in production.

There was a high proportion of schools (within the 'education' category in Table 4.15) acting as a host for work experience. This reflects the dearth of other placements in the popular area of 'working with children' and also that students for whom it was difficult to find a placement were sometimes placed with caretakers or grounds staff. Several schools commented that placing a student in a school was not an ideal experience of work, but clearly many are forced down this line.

The distribution of employer type varied considerably by case study area but there was no obvious pattern. The employer distribution also varied by whether or not it was the student's choice of placement. Those who were placed in health or legal and media placements were most likely to have indicated they got their first choice placement, but for those in retail or banks and other offices much lower proportions indicated this was the case. For example, in health 82 per cent said the placement was their first choice, but in retail 58 per cent said it was their first choice.

Likewise, when looking at the selection rationale, those students who had indicated 'interest in the career' as a motivating factor were more likely to be placed in health or legal and media type placements, while those who had not are found in higher proportions in retail and banks or offices.

4.6.2 Type of work

Students were also asked to indicate the nature of work on their placement. Most were either 'helping someone do a job' (30.8 per cent) or 'doing odd jobs' (27.5 per cent). Just under 19 per cent did an actual job, and 17 per cent moved around departments. Only six per cent had a specially created job for the placement.

In terms of the types of employers providing different types of work on placement, doing an 'actual job' or 'odd jobs' was most common in the retail sector and office environments. Helping someone else do their work was most common in education, engineering and health, while moving between different departments was the domain of the public sector and banks and to some extent professional organisations.

Employers appeared to adopt a wide variety of approaches to placements. Some organised fairly structured placements, with planned programmes taking the student through all aspects of work at the site. Others were more unstructured. This could mean letting the student take the lead, for example:

> *'We like them to involve themselves, take the initiative, we'll give them a go in most areas of the company but it is up to them what they get out of it.'*

The employers interviewed generally all ensured that the student was introduced to all the relevant people with whom they were

likely to come into contact. This was usually part of a brief induction process on the first day, when issues such as health and safety were discussed.

A few employers mentioned that they save up 'mini projects' for students on work experience. These tended to be bits of work that were not essential but would be useful if done. They were seen as a means of gaining some direct value from having the student. One national retail chain with a national approach to work experience is, we were told, devising a means to encourage staff to think of projects that might be done by work experience students, both pre-16 and post-16. These might include, looking at queuing lengths and times, customer service, IT projects *etc.*

4.7 Placement visit

The area co-ordinators' survey indicated that in most schools all students received a visit from a teacher during their placement. However, the case studies suggest that, although most schools aim to make a visit, not all students received one.

The organisation of teacher visits seemed to vary considerably between schools, with the influence of the teacher responsible for work experience, and the commitment of the school to work experience, appearing to be the main determining factors. In some schools all teachers shared some of the burden, while in others the work experience co-ordinator struggled to get any volunteers. The most common situation however was for the PSE team or the Year 10/11 form tutors or any teachers with Year 10/11 teaching responsibilities being expected to undertake some visits (almost as a *quid pro quo* for the school time freed up by the students' absence). There were also incidences where the careers adviser linked to the school contributed to placement visits.

In a couple of instances other mainstream teachers were allocated placements closest to their subject specialism. For example, science teachers going to hospitals and certain manufacturing companies, business studies teachers going to IT or retail type organisations, art and design teachers to graphic designers. This was considered useful because the teacher may have a little more knowledge of the type of company and could expand their knowledge of the work related aspects to their subject area. In some cases such contacts could lead to links for other purposes, *eg* a teacher placement or curriculum project. However, there could be problems with making time for visits in the school timetable, especially for those not involved in teaching the year which was out on placement.

Most commonly though, teachers were allocated placements on a voluntary basis, choosing from a list on the basis of their knowledge of the student or the location of the placement relative to the teacher's home. Using a number of teachers to do

the visits could mean that the student was visited by a teacher whom they did not know very well.

The proportion of students visited, as given by the co-ordinators, varied from less than ten per cent to 100 per cent, with most cases being at the higher end of the scale.

Few schools guaranteed all students a visit, mainly because some placements were located a long way from the school, often found by parents or relatives. However, some contact was usually made with the school telephoning the placement if a visit could not be arranged.

> *'Only five last year were not visited and this was because they were working mobile. One was with a telephone engineer who was out all of the time, another was with a plumber, another was a painter and decorator. We rang them.'*

In one school where the students had been going out on a rolling programme, the work experience co-ordinator had no support at all with placement visits. As she admitted:

> *'We do not visit many. There are too many to do. As it is at the moment, because I have got to go in my free time, it is not always guaranteed firms will agree to that time. Also if you have only got one free lesson to go into the town centre and back you can't do it.'*

A teacher in another school confirmed this problem:

> *'There is absolutely no way, in one week, one person could visit everybody. Its a good thing to have staff doing visits. It gets them into industry. Also they see another side of the kids and the staff enjoy it. They are generally supportive.'*

A couple of schools organising one-week placements were of the view that two-week placements required two visits, and this was one reason why the school felt unable to organise longer work experience. However, none of the schools we visited that did organise two-week placements visited twice, although some did where the placement lasted three weeks. In these cases the interviewees seemed unconvinced about the value of the second visit, other than as a means of keeping in touch.

Roughly three-quarters of the employers interviewed said that all or almost all students were visited on their work experience by a teacher. Employers seemed to like being visited by the teacher and most wanted some contact during the visit. It was seen as poor practice for a teacher not to visit the student or be visited by a teacher who did not know the student.

4.7.1 Content of the visit

Most placement visits seemed to be no more sophisticated than a cursory 'interview' with the student and their workplace supervisor sometimes together, sometimes individually. Generally

schools preferred to see the student on their own at some stage. By and large, the visit was informal and designed to check that the minimum requirements were being met, *ie* the placement was safe, the student was 'OK' and not being used in a purely menial capacity, and the employer was happy with progress of the placement.

In some cases teachers were given checklists and short reports to compile but this was unusual, largely because the visits were in the main done on a voluntary basis and the co-ordinator did not want to over burden the teachers with form completion. Even in cases where the teacher was provided with a list of questions and checks to make, the end result would normally be a tick across a piece of paper to indicate all was 'OK'. The main objective of the visit seemed more to do with ensuring that things were not going wrong rather than to check that things were going well or could be improved.

There were exceptions to this however, and in a few cases visiting teachers were asked to:

- complete a checklist of health and safety arrangements to be looked at during the course of the visit
- ensure the practicalities are being met — time keeping, completing the diary, dress *etc.*
- ask a list of questions of students and employers to help monitor the quality of the placement.

4.7.2 Students' views

Just under three-quarters, 73 per cent, of students in the survey received a teacher visit. The proportion visited varied by area (Table 4.16), the key to which appears to be the length of placement rather than the system they operate.

Interestingly, the lowest percentage of visits occurred in some of the smaller and more urban areas (*eg* Case Studies A and B). Of the one-week placements, 65 per cent were visited; of the two-week placements, 84 per cent were visited and of the three-week placements 88 per cent were visited.

Table 4.16: Teacher visit by case study area (per cent)

	Case Study Area						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	All Students
Teacher visited	61	57	73	69	90	97	73
Teacher did not visit	39	43	27	31	10	3	27
Base N =	*203*	*243*	*241*	*218*	*137*	*188*	*1,230*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

Students were asked to indicate what was discussed during the course of the teacher visit. They were prompted in their responses and the most common discussion concerned whether or not the student was enjoying the placement (40 per cent) and if they had any problems (37 per cent). Just 15 per cent discussed placement objectives and eight per cent discussed how to use the placement in school studies.

Finally, the data suggest that the less academically able were less likely to receive a teacher visit than the others. It is difficult to control for other factors here, but those students studying one to four GCSEs received a teacher visit in 69 per cent of cases, while those studying seven or more GCSEs received a visit in 76 per cent of cases.

4.7.3 Conclusion

The key purpose of most placement visits appeared to be to check on the general welfare of the student, rather than, for example, to ensure that the student's placement objectives were being met or to intervene in the conduct of the placement.

Only around three-quarters of students are seen by someone from the school, despite such visits being generally considered good practice, especially by employers.

4.8 Debriefing and curriculum integration

All schools visited issued guidance notes and often used some kind of diary as a means of recording the placement and prompting the student as to what they might do or look for during the course of the placement, with mini projects and research exercises that could be undertaken. Diaries also often contained generalised objectives for the placement.

It was considered essential by those involved that debriefing activities were conducted and that they took place as close to the end of work experience as possible. In nearly all the schools we visited debriefing occurred, mostly through the PSE curriculum or form tutorials. The time devoted varied from none, largely because the work experience was too close to the end of term, to three or four sessions. In general, the immediate de-brief took place in one or two lessons. A few schools mount exhibitions of the students' experiences and even make whole school presentations; however, this was not the norm in the schools we visited.

> *'They have a PSE lesson immediately after they get back which is to review their work experience. They also have to hand their booklets in. We read them through and give them back.'*

> *'Post-placement review is done in a careers class, when they are given a debriefing form to complete and they have an open discussion on their views. This is done in just one class, but there is also time to*

discuss placements during tutorial time. They also do an exhibition of photos, diaries etc. from work experience.'

'Two PSE sessions are devoted to the debrief, when they have an open forum to discuss work experience amongst themselves.'

'We see them in PSE and go through all the forms and letters and employers forms. Ask why it did not go well. Majority only take a few minutes. If there had been a problem we will spend more time.'

However, we did find a few examples of more innovative work with work experience debriefing.

For example, one school had introduced a drama day, used to draw out aspects of work experience and provide a forum through which students were able to share each others' experiences. This was conducted on the first day back after work experience in two half-day sessions — half the group participating on each. The teacher involved, however, felt that the group participating in the afternoon had already lost some of their enthusiasm, highlighting the importance of conducting the process immediately on return. This is being looked at for next year to try and find a way of involving all the group throughout the day.

Raising self awareness and exploration of strengths and weaknesses was a common element to debriefing sessions and co-ordinators often stressed the importance of work experience in future job hunting and in completing UCAS application forms. This is sometimes taken up by careers advisers in their Year 11 interviews.

Most schools sought some kind of feedback from the employer, although this was often left to the student to organise, and in many cases would not be followed up by the school should the student forget. The feedback would often be used as part of the NRA.

Most schools organised time for students to write thank you letters and this was often doubled up with a request for placements in the following year in school based areas. This might be done through English classes or in PSE/tutor groups.

4.8.1 Curriculum integration

Schools also built on their students' experiences beyond the immediate post-placement debriefing session. English served as the main vehicle for integrating work experience into the curriculum, with a number of schools using verbal or written presentations as part of coursework, sometimes being used as part of the GCSE. In other disciplines, formal use of work experience as a curriculum activity *across the board* was rare, although some teachers were involved on an individual, more opportunistic basis. Work experience co-ordinators seemed

unable to persuade other teachers to use work experience and left it very much up to individuals.

In one school the work experience co-ordinator was also a French teacher and used the placement as a platform for vocabulary work and French discussion (based around a worksheet entitled *'Mon expérience de travail.'* In another school, work experience was integrated into the geography course. In Year 11 the students do a module called 'Work and Employment'. The teacher believed that the work experience fitted in well:

> *'From a motivation point of view it is very good because they get some prior experience and it makes it more interesting.'*

In a third, work experience was used in sociology, where they did a social research project while on placement, but it was too early to use it for GCSE coursework as the placement took place early in the summer term of Year 10.

However, these examples appeared to be the exceptions rather than the rule.

Generally teachers seemed to view the work involved in introducing work experience into the curriculum in anything other than the most obvious ways, as too onerous given other curriculum pressures. Some expressed the need for more ideas and dissemination of good practice in this area.

There were suggestions that in the English curriculum more could be made of oral presentations of work experience. For example, one teacher argued that:

> *'Often there is a somewhat limited use of narrative diaries and there is scope for much more variety in the use of work experience, in project work as well.'*

Oral work in particular was considered useful due to being more accessible in mixed ability sessions.

Although English was the main vehicle for the use of work experience in the curriculum, a number said that even in this subject its use had declined because of the national curriculum. For example:

> *'Work experience is not integrated into the curriculum mainly because of time constraints. I cannot get my own curriculum done let alone add to it. We used to liaise with the English Department. They used to have a folder of assignments and they used to do one on work experience. They also did a talk. The national curriculum means they can no longer do that.'*

> *'The English course has changed because of the national curriculum. The course work element has gone. The teachers still use it but it depends on the teacher. Some see it as a chore and some see it as a good opportunity.'*

Table 4.17: Work experience and the school curriculum (per cent)

	Studying	Subject knowledge used in placement	Placement experience used in classwork
Mathematics	93	53	8
IT	35	51	19
English	92	47	34
Business studies	30	43	26
Arts	40	32	8
Design technology	54	25	11
Sciences	93	18	6
Geography	51	12	5
History	40	6	3
Foreign languages	80	4	5
Base N =	*1,187*		

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

We asked the students themselves about the relevance of work experience to their school studies. Table 4.17 looks at the use of school subjects during the work experience placement, and also whether the experience gained on the placement was used in classwork.

These findings suggest that students see, in general terms at least, a number of connections between their academic curriculum and their experience on their placement. Some 40 to 50 per cent of students used their knowledge of IT, mathematics, business studies and English, during the course of the placement and so considered these subjects as at least partly relevant to the work experience.

One of the schools we visited had found a similar result. Students had been asked to complete an evaluation form when they returned from work experience. It asked about involvement with the curriculum and found that Maths was the subject most frequently identified as being developed by the placement, closely followed by English, and Science and Technology.[1]

Looking now at these subjects in more detail to explore variation between employers, it is noticeable that certain types of employer seem more associated with curriculum themes than others. Table 4.18 presents the percentage of students who used a subject they studied, during the course of their placement.

[1] This finding is an apparent contrast to the findings of the recent NFER study (Weston, 1996) which found relatively little use of 'numeracy' skills on work placements. However, the methodologies and measurements used by the two studies are different and this may explain the variation in the findings.

Table 4.18: Use of school subjects on work experience by employer type (per cent)

	Business studies	English	IT	Maths
Legal and media	64	60	61	51
Public sector	39	45	67	41
Banks/office	64	53	86	71
Education	9	69	27	61
Production	41	28	46	50
Health	35	23	57	29
Retail	53	41	41	54
All employers	*44*	*47*	*50*	*54*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

The financial services and professional employers seem to provide the widest opportunities for subject development on placement.

There were also other factors involved. Those studying fewer subjects were less likely to identify opportunities than those studying more. For example, considering those studying maths, 38 per cent of those doing one to four GCSEs used maths on the placement, while 49 per cent and 59 per cent respectively of those studying five or six, and seven or more GCSE subjects used maths on the placement. This might suggest that the more academically able see the wider applications of a subject in the placement than others (as NFER found) or it might mean that the employer keeps the less academically able away from tasks that need a certain level of numeracy.

Looking again at Table 4.17 it is apparent that the development of work experience into the curriculum is considerably less than the use of subject knowledge on work experience. Only in English was there a significant use of work experience — in just over one-third of cases. Business studies was next and this may reflect the fact that in a number of schools a business studies teacher was responsible for co-ordinating work experience.[1]

There was very little variation between areas, preparation, type of placement or biographical variables in incidence of work experience being used in the classroom. There was, though, some variation in the use of work experience in English by case study area and by length of placement. Over half the students who had three-week placements used the placement in English classes, while only 31 and 35 per cent of students on one and two-week placements had done likewise.

[1] The 1994/95 DfEE school-business links survey (DfEE, 1996) found a higher use of work experience in English. Our later study may have picked up a change in the basis of the English GCSE course.

To explore use of work experience in classwork more generally, students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: *'my work experience was relevant to my classwork'.*

Overall, only 16 per cent agreed that their experience had been relevant to their classwork. But some found it more relevant than others:

- Unsurprisingly, those who had had their work experience used in the classroom were more likely to see it as relevant to classwork. This was especially the case where the work experience had been used in English lessons (in these cases 25 per cent saw the experience as relevant to classwork, while only ten per cent of those who had not used their placement in English classes viewed the placement as relevant to the curriculum).
- Those going into the sixth form or to FE college saw their experience as more relevant to classwork than those intending to enter the labour market (18 per cent compared to 12 per cent agreeing with the statement).
- The greater the exposure to a computer in the course of the placement, the more likely the student saw the placement as relevant to classwork (13 per cent of those who never used a computer saw the placement as relevant while 21 per cent of those who used one frequently saw it as relevant).
- Finally, those on three-week placements saw more links between the experience and classwork than the others, perhaps because the longer length meant it was taken more seriously by the school (although there was no distinction between one and two-week placements).

4.8.2 Use of computers

Looking in more detail at the use of computers on placements, just over half the sample in the students' survey (51 per cent) said that they had not used one. The remainder were split more or less evenly between those having used one frequently, or occasionally (24 and 25 per cent respectively). The differences by area were not significant.

Not surprisingly, the type of employer providing the experience was a significant factor affecting use of computers. Office environments, the financial sector and professional type employers are most likely to incorporate a computer element to the placement. Retail, health and education being the least likely. Table 4.19 shows use of computers by sector.

It was noticeable that the more academically oriented students gained access to placements with computers in much higher proportions than others. For example, 56 per cent of those studying seven or more GCSEs had access to a computer,

Table 4.19: Use of computers by work experience employer (per cent)

	Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Base N =
Professional and arts	31	26	43	115
Public sector	40	35	25	75
Banks/office	17	33	50	138
Education	58	28	14	223
Production	50	21	29	208
Health	70	21	9	94
Retail	66	20	14	307
All	*51*	*25*	*24*	*1,160*

Source: IES work experience students' survey, 1995/96

compared to 44 per cent of the others. Also, 57 per cent of those going on to the sixth form gained access, while only 34 per cent of those entering the labour market had access to computers. However, those studying IT were significantly more likely to be placed with employers where access to a computer was part of the placement, and these students were more likely to be studying higher numbers of GCSEs. However, studying IT and intended post-16 destination were not correlated.

Word processing and database packages were the most commonly used types of software — cited by 36 and 29 per cent of students respectively. Spreadsheets and network type environments were used in 22 and 14 per cent of cases. Other packages or systems included graphics (16 cases), CAD/CAM (14 cases), games (!) (13 cases). There were also various stock control and cash till systems used.

4.8.3 Conclusion

Students generally returned from their placement keen to share their experience. Debriefing immediately on their return is considered very important by schools. However, it would appear that not a great deal else is made of the experience in formal learning, especially if the placement takes place just before the summer holidays.

Interestingly, mathematics was the subject used most on the placement, but the students' experience on their placement was rarely referred to in mathematics lessons.

Examples where the placement was imaginatively built into the curriculum, in business studies or French for example, tended to be where the subject teacher was the work experience co-ordinator.

There appeared to be three main reasons why work experience was not further integrated within the curriculum:

- The current GCSE syllabuses were said to restrict the teacher's scope for exploiting work experience, with less emphasis placed on course work in English, for example.
- Some subject teachers did not seem aware of the full potential of work experience as a vehicle for bringing their subject alive, and perhaps there is the need for more dissemination of good practice.
- Finally, there was a general concern to distinguish work experience from normal school work. There was a feeling that placements' value lay in their difference from school life. The more the two were blended together, the less influential the experience would be.

4.9 Accreditation

Nearly all area co-ordinators reported in their survey that students in most or all of the schools in their area recorded their achievements from work experience in their National Record of Achievement (NRA). In addition, students generally received a certificate either from the central agency, where one was involved, or from their school.

In schools where there was a high proportion of young people entering the labour market, the employer contribution to NRA was highly valued, and was seen as one of the most important outcomes for young people in terms of helping them get jobs or employed status YT. One school conducted a formal writing up session of their work experience under exam conditions which was entered into their NRA. This was done immediately on return and the importance of the exercise was stressed in terms of future use. It was taken very seriously by pupils, most of whom did summaries which were useful to them in job/college applications.

In a number of areas accreditation systems were in the process of being developed. In a part of one of the case study areas, a number of schools were embarking on a new accreditation system. The pupils do a work experience module and are graded on their work experience placements, building up credits in four areas: careers, action plans, the placement and NRA. The work experience co-ordinator marks the work as Level 1, 2 or a credit against agreed marking criteria. The school then have to call in a moderator, who goes through the folder of work with the pupil and will either agree or disagree with the mark.

4.9.1 Core skills

Employer and school respondents were generally sceptical about the feasibility of using work experience, as currently constituted, as a means of developing and accrediting core skills. The views we encountered in schools may reflect our sample which involved

very few teachers of GNVQs and similar courses. Concerns centred on:

- the timespan of the work experience placement and whether a week or two was long enough for someone to demonstrate their skill level
- whether employers would be willing to spend the time assessing skill levels
- whether any assessment would take place on a consistent basis.

One employer told us that:

> *'We have to fill in a form about the student and it can be difficult. It is difficult to fairly judge the big things in only a couple of weeks. It's OK to test punctuality and dress etc., but other things like self-confidence, initiative etc. are impossible to do properly. It could be possible to look at IT skills and communication skills, use of the telephone etc. — but even there it depends on what opportunities they have.'*

4.9.2 Students' survey

In 69 per cent of cases in the students' survey, a written review was made of the work experience to be included in the pupil's National Record of Achievement. In a further 20 per cent of cases a review was made for 'some other record', and in 12 per cent of cases no review was made of the placement at all.

There was not a great deal of difference between the case study areas, although case study areas B and C had lower than average proportions using the placement as part of the NRA. Other determining factors included:

- use of work experience in English — where this had occurred use of the NRA was more likely: 78 per cent compared to 63 per cent
- if the pupil was visited by a teacher during the placement, use of the NRA was more likely — 69 per cent, compared to 63 per cent
- if the details of the placement had been discussed prior to the placement, use of the NRA was again more likely — 70 per cent, compared to 61 per cent
- those pupils placed in the public sector or education were more likely to have completed an NRA and those health and retail least likely.

4.9.3 Conclusion

The accreditation of a students' work experience appears to revolve mainly around the students' own statement in the NRA and validation that they did complete the placement. However, there was concern that much more would make the placement more like school and therefore limit the impact.

4.10 Key points

- Generally, work experience co-ordinators rely on a policy of inertia selling (by going back to past placement providers) and self-help (through students and parents) to recruit new employers to work experience. There was little evidence of systematic marketing to employers.
- We found little evidence of employer fatigue. Although a few employers felt that they did have less capacity than they used to, to take on a number of students at any one time, most said that they could take more at other times of the year.
- Health and safety was more of a concern to schools rather than employers, and in areas where schools conducted all or some of the checks rather than where central agencies took on that responsibility.
- Health and safety was one area where central agencies, more familiar with the issues involved, could provide an efficient service, especially where they used systems already set up for careers service vacancies or youth training.
- The other issues that emerged include:
  - Not all new placements were checked for health and safety, particularly in school based areas. Even when they were, the process was often conducted by form, questionnaire or telephone, rather than personal visit.
  - Some schools (a minority) were unaware about exactly what checks should be made, although health and safety awareness training supported by White Paper funding was beginning to tackle this issue.
  - Schools were beginning to categorise employers by the degree of risk and concentrate their resources on visiting ones where the risk was highest.
  - Employers reported that health and safety checks were largely cursory, although there was limited evidence of more frequent visits in recent years.
- Matching students to appropriate placements was considered to be a crucial ingredient of a successful work experience programme. Schools tended to be protective of their role in the matching process, emphasising the importance of their knowledge of the students, their interests and abilities.
- Career considerations, rather than curriculum-based considerations, were the most commonly used criteria to match pupils and placements.
- Employers were particularly keen that students were interested in their work area and motivated to come. They did not generally choose students for placements, although there were suggestions among schools that employer selection was rising.

- Most students (almost 90 per cent in our students' survey) were involved in choosing their placement, though generally this choice was restricted to a certain number of specified placements or general work categories. Students who were involved in choosing their placement, especially those who obtained their first choice, were generally happier with their placement than those who did not.
- Despite the importance attached to pre-placement preparation, a quarter of students said that they had not discussed the details and purpose of their placement before it took place.
- Around 40 per cent of students said that they had met with their employer prior to the placement. Employers valued these meetings as a means of getting to know the student and understanding what they wanted from the placement.
- Students in the survey undertook placements with a wide range of employers, although the genders split into a familiar pattern, with some 80 per cent of placements in the education and health sectors filled by girls, and a similar percentage in the production sector by boys.
- While on their placement most students were either 'helping someone do a job' (31 per cent) or 'doing odd jobs' (27 per cent). Just under 19 per cent did an actual job and 17 per cent moved around departments. Only six per cent had a specially created job for the placement.
- Although schools said they visited nearly all students out on placement, only three-quarters of the students in our survey said that they had a visit. Employers felt in-placement visits to be an important element of good practice. The purpose of most placement visits was to check on the general welfare of the student, rather than influence the conduct of the placement.
- All schools visited issued students with diaries or workbooks to use on their placement. The extent of debriefing on return to school varied and was limited where placements took place near school holidays, *eg* at the end of the summer term.
- We found rather limited evidence that work experience was used in the mainstream curriculum. Even in English, formal use of the placement was limited by the nature of the current syllabus. Students reported that mathematics was the subject used most on their placement, but that their placement experience was rarely referred to in mathematics lessons.
- The accreditation of work experience appears to revolve mainly around the students' own statement in the NRA and validation from employers that they did complete the placement. There was concern that much more would make the placement more like school and therefore limit the impact.
- Most respondents, particularly from schools and employers, were generally sceptical about the feasibility of using work experience, as currently constituted, as a means of developing and accrediting core skills.

5. Cost and Funding of Work Experience

In this chapter we look at the information collected on the costs of work experience and how programmes are funded. It concentrates mainly on the direct costs of placement provision. We did not seek to put a value on indirect school and employer based inputs.

5.1 Placement costs

In the survey, co-ordinators were initially asked whether they knew the average cost per placement in their area. Just over half said they were aware of the average cost, just under one-third said they were not, and 15 per cent did not know (see Table 5.1). A number of co-ordinators commented on the difficulties of providing costs.

For example:

> *'We have no way of finding this out. There are too many schools, too many variables.'*
>
> *'It is difficult to say, as there are so many "hidden costs" borne by schools, employers, parents etc. There are very few realistic costings available.'*

This varied by type of organisation. The proportion knowing the average cost was much higher in areas with centralised systems than in other systems. In areas running a school based system, none of the co-ordinators said they were aware of an average cost figure.

5.1.1 Average cost of placements

Those that did know of the average cost per placement were asked what this average cost was, and what was included in the

Table 5.1: Knowledge of average cost, by type of work experience organisation (per cent)

	Centralised	Joint	School based	All areas
Yes	78.7	36.0	15.0	53.3
No	12.8	48.0	55.0	31.5
Don't know	8.5	16.0	30.0	15.2
N =	47	25	20	92

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

Table 5.2: Average cost per placement, by type of delivery

Type of organisation	Mean cost £	Median £	N =
Centralised	22.04	23.00	37
Joint	29.4	24.00	9
School based	28.7	21.00	3
All	*22.43*	*23.00*	*48*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

per placement figure. Table 5.2 shows that the mean approximate cost of work experience placements was £23.40, whilst the median was £23.00. The data suggest that the costs provided were lower in areas with centralised systems than in other areas, but the numbers are small. It should be borne in mind that different agencies will account for costs in different ways, for example, in areas of salary costs, overhead and other indirect costs, the cost of school and employer staff *etc*. We may therefore not be comparing like with like.

In the survey, the smallest average cost given was £10 per placement, whilst the largest was £89. This rather large value was given by a respondent from a multiple area with schools using a central agency to find some placements and organising the rest themselves. The cost was an estimate based on calculations made by one school in 1993. The school had found that the administration costs, travel, salaries and school based costs added up to £25,000 for 350 placements. In addition, there was a £19 per pupil fee paid to the central placement service. This case has been excluded from the analysis because it was so extreme.

The costs varied a little by type of organisation, with the average cost being lower in areas with centralised systems and slightly higher in areas with joint and school based systems. In the latter case, however, only four respondents provided cost material.

When asked what these costs included, 45 of the 48 co-ordinators who provided costs said the figure covered all the centralised administration costs but excluded the costs incurred by the schools themselves, for example, teacher time *etc*. One co-ordinator, giving an average cost of £15, included school costs. Another said the average cost of a placement of £25 included all the central administration costs excluding the costs of the premises. The remaining area, with a cost of £50 per placement, provided no information at all.

5.1.2 School costs

None of the 30 schools we visited could provide us with a cost figure for the resources they put into organising work experience places. One school attempted to fully cost their work experience programme,

'but it was almost impossible and we gave up.'

Most teachers felt the organisation of work experience was very time consuming, involving large peaks in demand usually in the month or so prior to the placement. Most co-ordinators are given a time allowance per week, between one and two hours was most common. This allowance did not seem to vary significantly with the form of work experience provision. Invariably though, they would stress the demands on their time outside school, as the following examples illustrate:

'I spend most of my free lessons and evenings at home getting everything set up. We had most done by Easter. I have six free lessons of 50 minutes every week. These are dedicated to work experience between February and April.'

'I spend 2.5 hours a week just on the paper work. All the visits are on top of that and I get no secretarial help. The letters were done in the "Preparation for Life" lessons. We have to sit and grade the diaries. 280 took a week working every night.'

'This year there were a lot of health and safety checks to do so I guess it was probably 30 to 40 days. We have never done any costing. It would normally be less. Certainly you are looking at 20 days definitely. That is £2.5k of our time. Its probably £3.5k in all. The main cost is our time.'

'It is a struggle keeping going with it. I spend about 16 hours a week on it although I am only given two hours off the timetable for it. The rest I do in my own time. I have a computer at home and come in to work on Saturdays or Sundays. I get no secretarial support at all. This is not the only thing I have to do as well. I will also organise Year 9, 10 and 11 Careers Interviews and arrange industry days and visits from outside speakers. Devising the booklet takes a long time. The biggest cost is my time but then that costs the school nothing.'

Secretarial or administrative support

Secretarial and administrative support was generally rare in the schools visited. In many cases the co-ordinators said they could really do with help mailing out letters *etc.* but the school office staff were overrun as it was.

'I have had no secretarial support. I simply use a spreadsheet and a laptop. Putting in the information takes the time. We have a school database of all the kids' names. I do the tying up of kids and employers always on the database.'

'Not as such but can ask the people in the office to do stuff and they will do, eg envelope addressing and photocopying. They have had some help.'

Where such support was provided it was felt to be invaluable.

Support from other teachers

Support from other teachers also varied. In some schools the support was very good, in others the concerns over the

curriculum outweighed the value of work experience, and the teachers complained about losing pupils from classes.

> *'They see the value of it. Usually they are supportive. A lot of kids are not motivated to work from home. They come from unemployed families. Teachers support the experience.'*

> *'This varies depending on the teacher. If it means putting more work onto them, they usually do not want it. Those that have got groups are very good and help.'*

In one school, the work experience co-ordinator had consulted with teachers to establish how they would prefer the programme to be run. By trying to get them involved it was felt that they would be more likely to help. They also tried to match placements to teachers' interests.

5.1.3 School contributions to central agencies

In just over one-third of the areas (35 per cent), schools were making a contribution to a central agency for support with the provision of work experience. Not surprisingly, this proportion was highest in the areas which operated centralised systems.

Of the 32 areas where schools contributed to a central agency, 29 co-ordinators provided information on the approximate average payment. The mean payment was £14 and the median was £15. These contributions ranged from £3 in one centralised area to £27.50 in another area running a centralised system.

Again, a number had difficulties giving an exact figure. One co-ordinator explained:

> *'There are different costs for peak times, quiet times, schools with computer facilities, those without computer facilities etc.'*

Another pointed out:

> *'We operate a two tier charging system:*
>
> *a) a core service subscription for all infrastructure work and support paid at the beginning of the work experience season,*
>
> *b) a per pupil placed price.'*

5.1.4 Conclusions

The full costs of providing work experience placements are unknown. Where a central agency supports schools in the provision of placements, the cost of their support is more easily defined as they tend to be a separate unit and also charge schools or others in full or in part for their services. However, in-school costs and employer costs are unquantified.

Nevertheless it is clear that:

- work experience provision relies heavily on a personal subsidy by in-school co-ordinators in the form of their own time

- qualified teachers, on the appropriate pay scales, spend considerable time performing basic administrative functions that could probably be most cost-effectively conducted by a combination of cheaper clerical staff and better use of information technology.

5.2 Funding work experience

TVEI funding was still being used for the provision of work experience in a quarter of the areas which responded. The majority of these indicated that these funds were due to cease in summer 1996. There were some which expected the funds to run into 1997 and one case where we were told that the funding would not cease until January 1998.

For most areas, TVEI funding ceased in either the summer of 1994 or 1995. In a couple of cases, TVEI finished as early as 1991, whilst in one case, funding had ceased this year.

Six co-ordinators wrote on the questionnaire that TVEI money was never used for work experience, or only partly funded it when it was available.

5.2.1 Who contributes to work experience?

Co-ordinators were also asked to indicate which parties contributed to the costs of providing work experience placements in that area. Most respondents put a number of sources. As one explained:

> *'Work experience is mostly LEA delivered via the Careers Service with a small contribution in kind from schools and enhancement funding via the TEC.'*

Schools and TECs contributed to work experience in three-quarters of the areas, whilst the LEAs did so for around half (see Table 5.3). A quarter of the co-ordinators said that the Careers Service was involved in funding and one-third cited other sources.

Table 5.3: Who contributes to the cost of work experience?

Contributing agencies	% of areas
Schools	73.8
LEA	49.5
TEC	73.8
Careers Service	24.3
Other	30.8
N = 107	

* Percentages add to more than 100 since respondents could give more than one answer.

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

These included money from employers, EBPs, Trident, Government Office, Compact money and, in one case, an FE college.

In the school based group, 90 per cent stated that funding came from the schools themselves. One-third said they received funding from the LEA, and two-thirds from the TEC. Two-thirds of centralised areas said that they received funding from schools and LEAs, and almost 80 per cent from TECs. In areas operating joint systems, the most common sources of funding was the TEC and schools themselves, given by two-thirds of respondents.

5.3 White Paper funding

The final section of the co-ordinators' questionnaire was devoted to those areas which were receiving White Paper funding, and the effect this funding had on work experience provision.

5.3.1 Areas receiving funding

Of the 94 areas responding, 83 per cent were receiving the new White Paper funding, 16 per cent were not, and one per cent did not know. This varied slightly by the type of organisation of work experience, with all the school based areas receiving the funding down to just under two-thirds in the multiple systems (see Table 5.4).

One area was getting the funding, but only part of the area currently qualified, so they received a small amount only.

The survey also found nine areas where White Paper funding had been received but where TVEI funding was said to be continuing. This is possible under the new funding regime in areas where TVEI funding is due to cease in this financial year, or where funding has already ceased in part but not all of the area.

Where has the money gone?

In the case study areas, some, and in two cases all, the new funding had been retained by the TEC or allocated to a central agency, while the rest — generally less than half — had been distributed to schools.

Table 5.4: Proportion of areas receiving White Paper funding

Type of organisation	% of areas receiving White Paper funding	N =
Centralised	87.5	48
Joint	80.8	26
School based	75.0	20
All	*83.0*	*94*

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

The view of one central agency that had retained all the White Paper funding was that if the money was devolved it would:

> *'just get lost in school budgets and work experience would not necessarily benefit.'*

A problem in this area was that the number of schools was small. The agency felt that the funding needed to be retained centrally in order to cover the costs of staff required to undertake health and safety checking alone. In the larger areas, the agency argued, there was more scope for devolving budgets as there were greater possibilities for economies of scale.

5.3.2 Effects of White Paper funding

In order to assess the effect of this funding, co-ordinators were presented with a list of potential outcomes and asked to indicate to what extent these outcomes had taken place as a result of the new funding.

Table 5.5 shows that the greatest effect of the new funding was to encourage TECs to become more involved in the provision of work experience. Forty-four per cent of respondents felt that this had happened to a great or considerable extent, and a further 30 per cent said this had happened to some extent. It was evident from some of the case studies that the TEC had used, or were trying to use, the funding as a lever to achieve certain aims.

The two main areas of additional activity apparent from the co-ordinators' survey, confirmed by case study interviewees were:

Table 5.5: Effects of the White Paper funding (per cent)

Effect of White Paper funding	Great or Considerable Extent	Some Extent	Little or No Extent	N =
The TEC has become more involved in the provision of work experience	44.2	29.9	26.0	77
The health and safety vetting of potential placements has improved	35.1	24.7	40.3	77
A quality assurance system has been developed	32.5	32.5	35.1	77
Funding from the LEA has decreased	27.1	15.7	57.1	70
Teachers have been provided with more training on work experience	23.7	23.7	52.7	76
White Paper funding has replaced funds from other sources without bringing additional value	23.3	21.9	54.8	73
There have been moves to develop a centralised placing service	17.7	14.7	67.7	68
More attention has been paid to the use of work experience as a means of developing core skills	14.9	24.3	60.8	74
More employers have been brought into the system	5.3	34.7	60.0	75

Source: IES work experience area co-ordinators' survey, 1995/96

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- health and safety
- quality assurance.

An improvement to health and safety vetting of potential placements and the development of a quality assurance system had happened at least to some extent in over half of the areas responding.

For the other potential outcomes, however, over half the respondents said that they had happened to little or no extent. Just over two-thirds felt that moves to develop a centralised placing service had happened to little or no extent. This is may be because many areas already had such a system in place. Sixteen respondents wrote on the questionnaire that this was the case.

Only 40 per cent of areas felt that more employers had been brought into the system at least to some extent, and similarly, just under 40 per cent had seen more attention being paid to the use of work experience as a means of developing core skills.

Of the 79 respondents who made further comments regarding the provision of work experience, 60 referred to the new White Paper funding. The majority of these were positive and discussed improvements which had taken place, or were planned to take place, as a result of the new funding. There were a number, however, who expressed concerns or who were unable to comment on the effect of the funding. These are looked at in more detail below.

Improvements in provision

Thirty-four co-ordinators outlined improvements to the work experience provision as a result of the White Paper funding. These ranged from outlining very specific activities which had been funded, to rather general comments such as:

> *'The funding has allowed the atmosphere of continuous improvement to continue, despite the end of TVEI funding.'*

> *'A centralised programme has been developed over the past five years. White Paper money has allowed us to build on this to achieve a better quality and safer service.'*

> *'We had a fairly good system before, but it was developed with minimal funding and depended on the strong support from schools. The funding has helped us to develop further our search for total quality and to improve our safety standards. We still have a long way to go! Keep the money coming.'*

On the more specific activities, improvements to **health and safety** in both vetting workplaces and training teachers, had taken place. Sixteen co-ordinators referred to improvements in this aspect of provision and it was also an area where the White Paper funding had made an impact in the case studies (see

Section 4.2.6). In some areas, however, this had absorbed a great deal of the funds in the early stages. The following are typical:

'Additional health and safety checks have tended to absorb additional resources — in operating a centralised approvals system this should be short term (ie one academic year) and beyond this we would expect to turn attention to greater quality issues. Greater teacher training is on offer through health and safety courses, and diploma courses in education, but in limited numbers.'

'As a result of the new funding, schools have been able to work together in consortia to develop health and safety visits.'

'The bulk of the White Paper money has had to be spent on implementing the DfEE guidelines on health and safety vetting. A much smaller amount has been available for quality development.'

There was more **general training of teachers** in terms of quality, core skills development *etc.*, as the following examples illustrate:

'In 1993, we introduced a health and safety vetting system for all centrally generated placements, assessing placements for risk into high and low categories. Teachers and other colleagues in schools have also been trained. The involvement of the TEC has allowed us to look at quality assurance and new guidelines are being drafted. The extra money has meant more training for teachers this year on core skills and allowed us to provide additional value.'

'This is the first year of the new arrangements. The TEC has co-operated with employers and teachers to produce a quality kitemarking system to award quality improvement and achievement in work experience provision; a training pack is now in print which will significantly improve teacher training in this area.'

The improvement of quality by means of developing **quality assurance systems** had also been addressed in several areas.

'Development of quality standards have been made possible and all schools are now working towards development plans for our standards through self review checklists and audit of current provision. This follows guidance from advisers at the EBP.'

'The involvement of the TEC has allowed us to look at quality assurance and new guidelines are being drafted.'

Another area where improvements were common seemed to be improvements in running the **central database of placements**, either through introducing new computer equipment or increasing staff time available. In some cases, this had resulted in more employers being contacted or revisited.

'New funding has enabled us to introduce a new computerised system/network. This will increase administrative efficiency, enable production of high quality job descriptions for students, make analysis of activities and provision of improved statistical data possible.'

'The funding has enabled us to purchase new computer hardware and software dedicated to work experience paperwork. It has also enabled

us to employ additional clerical help to cope with introducing the new computer software system and with peak demand for work experience.'

'Set up an effective database of work experience registered providers which is valid and up-to-date. (NB Increase from 2,000 providers registered to 4,050 in past eight months.)'

A number of co-ordinators mentioned that **materials and resources** had been improved. This was either in the form of general guidelines to teachers in schools, improved materials for students and parents, often in more than one language, or better marketing materials for employers.

'Funding has enabled development work in areas where resources and materials were needed, eg booklets translated into local community languages.'

'Extra staff have been provided to find new employers and work on booklets for employers, parents, etc.'

'Some funds have been retained centrally to cover publication of new county work experience guidelines and all associated research/meetings etc. (with HSE, TEC, Insurance Officers etc.) and production of new work experience documentation and printed in sufficient quantities for all schools.'

Problems with new funding

Not all the comments about the new funding were favourable. Twelve co-ordinators raised specific concerns about the effects of the new system. These generally concentrated on the fact that the new funding represented a fall in support or had caused agencies to take on extra bureaucracy.

'The new funding does not cover the cost of providing a central service. Without TVEI funding, schools will have to pay out of their own budgets to make up the shortfall in costs. There are no funds to cover teacher visits.'

'With the end of TVEI, schools will find it very difficult to continue their programmes. As the new funding is only for developing existing schemes this will not solve the underlying issues of under funding. The LEA will not finance work experience at the end of TVEI.'

'The additional paperwork required by the TEC, together with meetings and 'phone calls, has placed a considerable burden on the team of three staff plus LEA staff. This is totally disproportionate to any benefits deriving from TEC funding to date. It is to be hoped that Year 2 will bring greater benefits.'

'The issue of funding is always difficult. Under TVEI funding, our area received £30,000 contribution towards work experience, now we receive £26,400. It is therefore a misnomer to talk of new funding. Work experience succeeds because we have a highly committed team, and a considerable commercial operation which subsidises it through the Education Business Partnership.'

In one of the case studies a number of respondents were concerned about how long the new money would last and whether they could set up long-term systems on short-term funding. One respondent added:

> *'The change is largely that the contract is based around management information. Curriculum support does not seem to be an issue. It's more about how many pupils have been out for how many days. There is no real curriculum development. There is no reference in the White Paper about curriculum development, learning etc. They want to improve the area of quality. The TEC, give it its due, is interested in quality, but their paymasters seem more interested in quantity.'*

Too early to tell

Finally, there was a group of co-ordinators who indicated that it was too early to tell what the effects of the funding had been. This was for a number of reasons:

- the funding had been used to audit current provision and this process was still ongoing or only just completed
- the organisation of work experience had not yet been finalised and so funding arrangements had not been settled
- the new system had only been running a short while:

> *'Early days still. TECs are new to this game and need more time to develop quality assurance and provide training for co-ordinators.'*

One respondent indicated that it was not possible to tell the effect of the old funding apart from the new.

> *'It is very difficult to gauge a direct link between White Paper funding and development which we would have tried to pursue in any event, eg improved vetting, increased employer involvement.'*

5.4 Key points

- The full costs of providing work experience places are largely unknown.
- Central agency costs average out at £23 a place. However, this figure excludes school based and employer costs. In-school work experience co-ordinators are normally only allocated a couple of hours a week to carry out their responsibilities regardless of the system. Where schools contributed to an external agency the average payment was around £14 to £15 a place.
- We concluded that work experience provision relies heavily on a personal subsidy by in-school co-ordinators in the form of their own time. In addition, qualified teachers, on the appropriate pay scales, spend considerable time performing basic administrative functions that could probably be more cost-effectively conducted by a combination of cheaper clerical staff and better use of information technology.

- In most cases, part of the new funding has been retained by TECs or other central agencies to fund general improvements in provision across the area, and the rest distributed directly to schools to fund specific activities. An ancillary effect of the funding is that TECs have become more involved in the provision of work experience in their area.
- More directly, White Paper funding appears to have been used to:
  - improve health and safety vetting procedures, *eg* by bringing external agencies, co-ordinating checks by schools, provide more training to teachers and others involved in checks, distributing guidelines and checklists
  - improve employer contacts, through the development of computerised databases
  - develop quality assurance systems and best practice guidelines
  - replace other funding sources (*eg* the LEA) which have been in decline.

6. Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to map out work experience provision in England and Wales, to examine the benefits of different approaches to provision, and to assess the quality of work experience programmes.

Our research has shown that nearly all young people go on a work experience placement, largely of their own choice, in their last compulsory year of education — over half a million every year. However, we have also found that when the placement occurs, how long it lasts, how it is organised and even why it takes place at all, varies from area to area and from school to school. The preceding chapters lay out a detailed picture of the diversity of work experience provision in England and Wales.

In this concluding chapter we briefly draw together our conclusions on the benefits of different approaches to the provision of placements before turning in more detail to the issue of quality.

6.1 Central vs school based systems

Central agencies appeared particularly effective in providing a labour market and a strategic support service to schools. The former involves attracting employers to offer placements, sharing placements among schools, holding their details on a computer database and checking that they meet insurance and health and safety requirements. The latter involves co-ordinating when schools go out on placements and providing guidelines on quality, providing in-school training, and disseminating good practice.

Centralised systems seem less appropriate in rural areas, where there is less cross-over between schools. They also appear less effective in the delivery aspects of work experience and in particular the matching process, as the agencies lack the detailed knowledge of the students' ability, and interests.

The converse tends to be true of school based systems. In terms of recruiting and checking employers, schools can be less efficient than central agencies, although they can be more sensitive in matching students to appropriate placements.

There is therefore no clear advantage of one system over another. However, whatever the system, there is a role for a central agency to co-ordinate school activity in the area of work experience, disseminate good practice, monitor the quality of provision and at least support the recruitment of appropriate employers.

6.2 Quality of work experience

Young people generally enjoy their placement, but its quality and what they learn from it also varies. There are various ways of assessing the quality of and activity of work experience. These include looking at:

- whether placements meet their objectives
- whether the provision includes the essential ingredients thought to be necessary to produce satisfactory outcomes
- indicators of participant satisfaction.

Below we look at the evidence we found in each of these areas.

6.2.1 The objectives of work experience

Work experience is generally thought to serve three sorts of purposes:

- **transitional** — to do with easing the path between education and the labour market at 16 or beyond, *eg* understanding the world of work, career tasting, securing jobs and references *etc*.
- **developmental** — *eg* increased maturity (*ie* growing up), increased self-confidence and broadening of experience (*ie* growing wider) and improved motivation (*ie* growing on)
- **educational** — to do with using the workplace as a base for specific skill and knowledge development — *eg* the development of core skills.

Those involved in the practicalities of placements (students and employers) tend to stress the transitional aims. Placement managers (in schools and agencies) look for developmental benefits. Those furthest removed from the process (*eg* educationalists and those in TECs) emphasise the educational nature of placements.

In practice it appears that these objectives are applied to young people in a general way. We found relatively little evidence that specific learning objectives are developed for each student, taking into account the abilities and needs of students and the opportunities of the placement. Individual learning objectives are not widely discussed or set at the moment, for a number of reasons. In some cases schools do not see the value of such an

approach. In others, the resources do not exist to discuss with each student what they could aim to achieve during a placement. Others still may not know what they could or should expect in terms of specific outcomes.

There are two points to conclude from this:

- First, work experience appears to be widely seen as a generalised rather than tailored activity, attempting to fulfil a wide variety of aims, which tend to vary with the perspective of the beholder. It can be characterised as a 'scatter-gun' which, when fired, hits some of the targets, some of the time.
- Second, to change work experience into a 'smart' weapon, with a higher probability of hitting defined targets through the specification of individual learning objectives for example, may not be straightforward. The implications of further raising the level of input expected from schools in the development of a work experience programme, without changing the level of resources devoted to the activity, will need to be carefully considered.

6.2.2 The key ingredients of quality

The existence of individual learning objectives for students based on an analysis of need is one of the key ingredients of a successful work experience programme. Other factors affecting the quality of work experience and the provision of placements that emerged during the research include:

- the degree of importance attached to work experience in schools — as indicated by the commitment of the senior management team, the existence of school policies, the provision of resources (particularly administrative and IT support) and the timing and length of the placement
- a wide range of placements being available and the flexibility to arrange new placements to meet specific needs
- the safety of placements — in particular the efficiency and thoroughness of the health and safety checking procedures
- good preparation in both schools and workplaces
- a good match between the student, their interests and the placement — this appears most likely to happen when students are involved in choosing their placement in conjunction with their teacher
- the commitment shown by employers during the placement to provide the young person with a secure and stimulating experience
- the degree to which the learning and experience gained on placement is consolidated on return to school

- in-school evaluation of their programme, based on feedback from teachers, employers and students
- the effectiveness of external support agencies in the support they offer schools and employers.

Many of these points are set out in the TEC minimum criteria covering the quality of work experience (see Appendix D) and are covered in the Department's guides to schools and employers (DFE 1995a and 1995b). Furthermore, in a lot of areas central agencies are developing or have developed quality assurance criteria covering some of the above issues. There seems to be scope for co-ordination of these criteria to ensure that all work experience programmes are being accredited to a similar standard.

6.2.3 Our assessment of current quality

We have been able to assess the extent to which the key ingredients outlined above exist.

Importance to schools

Generally it appeared to us that work experience was more of an add-on activity than a fully integrated part of the schools we visited. This was evidenced, for example, by the lack of detailed policies on work experience, linked to the school development plan. It was also demonstrated by the location of most placements in the summer term of Year 10, especially where they take place near the summer holidays.

The main reason for the relative lack of importance attached to work experience in schools was that it was felt that the experience was not immediately relevant to GCSE attainment and therefore the 'league table' position of the school.

The evidence we saw suggested that on this indicator the situation had been getting slightly worse rather than better, with more schools moving work experience to Year 10, in contrast to the sentiments expressed in the Department's guidance to schools (DFE, 1995a). However, to achieve the aim of raising the importance of work experience to schools will not be easy unless:

- the connections between placements and academic attainment can be clearly demonstrated — and therefore schools see a route to greater academic success through work experience; or
- aspects of school life such as work experience (and ensuing outcomes such as student maturity, core skills or labour market knowledge) are given a weight equal to academic achievements in making explicit and implicit judgements of whole school performance.

Range of placements

The range of placements on offer appeared more supply than demand led (*ie* students choose from what is available rather than the other way round). This is to some extent inevitable given the lack of knowledge that many students have about the range of work they could experience, and the shortage of supply of some popular places.

Students generally adopted fairly traditional choices (*ie* girls opting for education and boys for production placements), in contrast to the theme of the Department's guidelines (DFE 1995a). Perhaps there is scope for more to be done throughout school life to break down stereotypical views of work, especially for boys, given that current labour market trends run against manual jobs in manufacturing.

Placements also seem to occur mainly in larger workplaces. This is unsurprising given that they are easier to access and may be better able to organise a placement programme. However, as the numbers of smaller employers continues to rise, this could be a concern to those who feel that placements should reflect typical workplace environments.

By and large we felt that the range of placements on offer seemed to be improving, with co-ordinators spending considerable efforts to find more unusual placements to meet particular needs.

Health and safety

Our findings raise questionmarks about the efficiency and effectiveness of the health and safety checking procedures in three areas in particular:

- are placements checked as regularly as they should be?
- are the people making the checks appropriately trained?
- is it efficient use of resources for teachers to make the checks, when they could be more easily conducted by less expensive, and more appropriately trained personnel?

The health and safety aspects of work experience are a major concern to schools, especially where they are not supported by a central agency. Although the situation appears to be improving, as White Paper funding allows TECs, EBPs, Careers Services and others to produce guidelines, checklists and INSET programmes *etc.*, there seems further scope for:

- the dissemination of clearer guidance on what is expected from schools
- the development of more efficient systems of checking health and safety.

Matching

Matching students to placements in which they are interested seems to be a crucial element of a good quality programme. There were concerns expressed about the time it took some (external) systems to make the matches and about late placements (*ie* placements organised just before the student started). However, we did not collect systematic data on either of these indicators. We did find, though, that 35 per cent of the students in our survey said that they were 'given' a placement by their school. As we also found students' satisfaction with their placement was higher where they had chosen the placement, we feel this is an indication that the quality of the matching process could improve.

Again the White Paper funding may be of help, in that in some areas it has led to investment in computer equipment and software to make the matching process quicker and easier.

Placement preparation

Pre-placement preparation is another important element of a good quality work experience programme. However, we found more evidence of general group rather than individualised preparation, for instance only three in four of our students reported discussing the placement in advance. We also found that employers were involved in only a minority of cases.

It is likely that this aspect of work experience will improve as more areas introduce and police quality assurance programmes.

Placement activities

The extent to which all students went on a planned programme of activity during their placement was not clear. It did not happen in many of the employers we visited, although they generally expressed interest in providing a more systematic programme if the school and/or the student articulated what they wanted. Furthermore, over a quarter of the students in our survey said that they 'did odd jobs' during their placement, suggesting the absence of a programmatic approach.

Employers in particular felt that teacher visits during a placement was a key element of good practice. However, we found only three-quarters of students were in fact visited. Visits were more common in rural than urban areas, suggesting that distance from school is not necessarily a problem. It was also unclear whether the visiting teacher was willing or able to materially affect the course of the placement. Visits seemed more of a 'welfare' than a 'steering' exercise.

It is unclear whether this aspect of work experience is getting better or worse.

Consolidation

When the students return to school, relatively little appears to be being made of the experience. Although we did encounter a number of examples of innovative and good quality practice, this appears to more the exception than the rule. The continued pressures of national curriculum and school academic performance have lead to less rather than more consolidation of work experience into the curriculum.

Evaluation and external support

We found little evidence of in-school evaluation. However, we found a growing range of external support, including evaluation of programmes as a whole as well as the development guidelines, quality criteria and specific support.

6.2.4 Participant satisfaction

We gathered information from four groups of work experience participants: students; schools; employers; and other 'stakeholders' such as TECs, EBPs, Careers Services and other central agencies. Taking each in turn:

- **Students** — seemed generally happy with their experiences.
- **Employers** — were also generally happy and willing to become more involved.
- **Schools** — generally thought work experience useful, but for maturational and developmental rather than educational reasons.
- **Other stakeholders** — were able to form a more wide-ranging judgement and felt there was scope for quality to improve and in particular felt more could be made of the potential educational opportunities. This view was particularly held by TECs who are becoming more involved in the provision of work experience, as a result of the new funding.

6.2.5 Overall assessment

It is difficult to draw a quantitative assessment of the quality of work experience placements, but it would certainly seem that on the above criteria, a number, maybe as much as a quarter, fall below the generally accepted minimum standards.

On the positive side this means that the vast majority of placements are of good quality. Furthermore, we found that the new funding in both England and Wales has provided an important impetus to improve the quality of provision in respect of:

- health and safety vetting procedures

- employer contacts, through the development of computerised databases
- the development of quality assurance systems.

However, limited resources, changes in the National Curriculum and the perceived lack of relevance to academic attainment may further constrain the quality and value of work experience programmes.

Nevertheless, we feel there is scope for further improvements, particularly in respect of:

- developing individual learning objectives for each student
- helping central agencies to provide schools with labour market and strategic support
- encouraging schools to provide two-week placements (which would appear to us to be the optimum length, taking into account the opportunity cost to schools, the cost to employers and the time it takes for students to reap full benefit)
- encouraging schools to avoid arranging placements close to school holidays, to maximise the scope for integration of the experience into the curriculum
- developing IT systems so that schools can have on-line access to employer databases and make matches in 'real time'
- providing more clerical support in schools to release high value teacher time to matching and preparation
- ensuring the efficient checking of health and safety and other requirements (see 6.2.3 above)
- co-ordinating the development of common quality assurance systems to accredit effective schools, which place emphasis on pre-placement preparation and the specification of individual leaning objectives, and
- disseminating support materials to employers to help them develop worthwhile programmes for their work experience students.

Appendix A: Case Study Details

The six case study areas were chosen by applying a number of criteria as follows:

- We concentrated on areas that are not currently receiving TVEI funding — *ie* those in receipt of the White Paper funding.
- On the basis of the co-ordinators' survey we identified three main systems for work experience provision — school based, centralised and joint (see Chapter 3) — and sought to go to a mix of each.
- Where there was a centralised system we wanted a mix of providers (*eg* Trident, Careers Service *etc.*).
- We chose areas where the students went out in the Summer term of Year 10 and some where they go out in the Autumn term of Year 11.
- We also sought a balance of areas by size, geography and region.

The make up of the areas in terms of the type of work experience provision and size, geography and region are set out in Table A1.1.

In our interim report we had a slightly different categorisation for the type of work experience provision. We identified four types of system:

- school based
- centralised

Table A1.1: Details of the case study area

	Case Study Area					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Type of provision:						
old categorisation	Centralised	School based	School based	Mixed	Centralised	Mixed
new categorisation	Joint	School based	Joint	Joint	Centralised	School based
Size	Medium	Small	Medium	Large	Small	Large
Geography	Urban	Urban	Mixed	Rural	Rural	Rural
Region	Wales	Midlands	Midlands	South	East	North

Source: IES

- hybrid and
- multiple.

School based systems were where each school in an area took responsibility for all aspects of the process and developed their own links with local employers willing to offer placements, they match pupils to placements, undertake briefings and so on.

Centralised schemes involved a third party such as the local TEC, LEA, EBP, Trident, and the Careers Service, which co-ordinates the timing of work experience, offer training and support for the teachers in schools responsible for work experience, operate a database of placements, provide a system for health and safety checking, undertake the matching of pupils and placements, and monitor the quality and success of placements.

A hybrid system was where schools use a central system for some activities but the remainder are carried out on an individual school basis.

Multiple systems typically fell into three groups:

- *mixed* — with some schools opting for the centralised or hybrid system and others going it alone
- *top-up* — with schools using the central placing agency for some of their placements and topping up that provision with their own placements
- *double mixed*— with schools operating some combination of both approaches.

In the event, this categorisation proved at the same time over-complicated (because we were dividing areas into too many types) and too simplistic (because provision in the case study areas was more complex than we had originally thought and was changing. Broadly, schools were more involved in the process than seemed apparent from our initial analysis. Secondly, central agencies played different roles in different schools within the same area. We therefore developed a different categorisation, as set out in Chapter 3) and divided areas on the basis of the predominant approach (*ie* that prevailing in the majority of schools). The three categories are:

- those where the predominant mode is an internal *school based approach*
- areas where a *centralised approach* is adopted by most schools (*ie* an external agency finds and vets places and matches students to them on the schools behalf), and
- areas where the schools and an external agency work together in a *joint approach*.

A1.1 Students' survey sample

This students' survey was conducted with 50 Year 11 or Year 10 students in the five schools visited in each case study area after their period of work experience.[1] In a number of cases the gap between the placement and completing the form was several months.

Some 1,582 questionnaires were distributed and 1,241 forms were returned giving a response rate of 78 per cent. This high response is largely due to the excellent co-operation received from schools, many of whom arranged for the form to be completed in class time and then collected them to ensure they were returned.

The survey has been analysed to explore variation in response by case study area, highlighting differences in student experience and perceptions of their placement as determined by the system in operation in each area. Background variables such as intended post-16 destination, sex, ethnicity and numbers of subjects studied have also been controlled for in the analyses, but it became apparent that these variables rarely exerted any strong influence on the nature, type and quality of experience.

It must be stressed that this survey does not cover a representative sample of students in the country undertaking work experience. Rather it provides a flavour of the student response to work experience in the six case study areas covered. Hence much of the variation in response can be attributed to area wide differences rather than to school or student factors.

The aggregate response is summarised in Table A1.2. The data are all presented by case study area.

These data help to present the characteristics of the sample from each case study area. In addition to the personal biographical variables two others are used here; the intended destination of students at post-compulsory schooling, and the number of subjects studied. The latter variable is divided into three categories none to four subjects, five or six subjects and seven or more subjects. These are crude indicators but should provide additional insight into student involvement in pre-16 work experience.

The data highlight interesting differences in the biographical make-up of each area. These are summarised below:

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[1] In a few cases schools were unable to conduct the survey with fifty students. However, these cases were made up for with additional forms from other schools.

Table A1.2 Biographical details by case study area (per cent)

	Case Study Area						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	All Students
Girls	56.7	51.4	49.4	64.4	47.1	50.8	55.6
Ethnic Minority	6.5	6.2	1.2	3.2	10.9	3.7	4.9
Looking for Job/YT	2.5	25.5	36.0	9.6	23.7	18.1	19.6
Entering VI Form	86.5	59.0	44.9	75.3	51.9	61.5	63.4
0-4 Subjects	33.2	17.5	11.5	10.8	11.9	6.5	15.4
Base N =	*204*	*244*	*244*	*221*	*140*	*188*	*1,241*

Source: IES work experience student Survey, 1996

- In aggregate, just under half intended to stay on in sixth form, a further 17 per cent to go on to sixth form college, and 17 per cent go to FE college, while just under 20 per cent intend to look for a job or enter YT.
- Case study A has a high proportion of young people intending to enter sixth form or sixth form college, but lower than average proportions studying more than four GCSEs (this may be a result of the inclusion of a special school which delivered 16 to 19 provision).
- Areas B, C and E have higher than average proportions intending to enter the labour market.
- Ethnic minorities are poorly represented across the sample — under five per cent overall. This renders analysis by ethnicity unfeasible due to the small sub-samples involved.
- The proportion of females varies significantly by area with an average of 53.6 per cent (this will be dependent on which area included the all-boys and all-girls schools).

Appendix B: The Questionnaires

YOUR VIEWS ON WORK EXPERIENCE

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Please answer the following questions as fully as you are able by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided.

About You

1. Are you? *(please tick one box)* Female ☐ or Male ☐

2. In which of the following groups would describe yourself? *Please tick one box.*

White	☐ 1	Black-African	☐ 2	Black-Caribbean	☐ 3
Black-other	☐ 4	Pakistani	☐ 5	Indian	☐ 6
Bangladeshi	☐ 7	Chinese	☐ 8	Other-Asian	☐ 9

Other *(please write in)* .....

3. What are you thinking of doing after Year 11? *(please tick one box)*

Stay on in the 6th form	☐ 1	Go to an FE college	☐ 2
Go to 6th form college	☐ 3	Look for a job or training place	☐ 4

Other *please write in* .....

Selecting Your Work Experience Placement

4. Were you able to choose your own placement? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. If yes, why did you choose this placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

I was interested in the career	☐	I thought it would help me decide what courses to take	☐
My parents suggested it	☐	I already knew employer	☐

Other *(please write in)* .....

6. Was your placement your first choice? *(please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ No ☐

7. How did you select your placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

From a list on a computer	☐	From a list in a book	☐
Family/friend suggested it	☐	It was given to me by the school	☐
It was arranged by an outside person	☐	From a Job Centre noticeboard	☐

Other *(please write in)* .....

8. **Did you discuss the details and purpose of your work experience placement with anyone before it took place?** *(please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ No ☐ **If No, go to Q11.**

9. If yes, who? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Someone from the employer ☐ Careers teacher ☐

PSE Teacher ☐ Another teacher ☐

Someone else *(please write in)* .....

10. What did you discuss? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

How to get to the placement ☐ Objectives of the placement ☐

How to dress and behave ☐ How to fill in a work diary ☐

Completing school assignments ☐ Relevance of the work experience to school studies ☐

11. Were you turned down by any employers when trying to find your placement? *(please tick one box)*.

Yes ☐ No ☐

About Your Work Experience Placement

12. What type of employer or industry did you go to for your placement? For example, a shop, an engineering company, a hospital, the council etc. *(please write in)*

.....

13. What did you do on your placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

An actual job ☐ Helping someone do a job ☐

Moving around different departments ☐ Doing a specially created job ☐

Doing odd jobs ☐

Something else *(please write in)* .....

14. If you did one main job on your placement, what was it? eg. hairdresser, mechanic, typist, sales assistant, clerical/office worker etc. *(please write in)*

.....

15. How long was your placement meant to be? *(please tick one box)*

One week ☐ 1 Two weeks ☐ 2 Three weeks or more ☐ 3

16. Did you complete your placement? *(please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ **If Yes, go to Q19.** No ☐

17. **If no, how many days did you miss?** *(please enter number in box)* ☐

18. Why did you not finish your work experience placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

I did not like the work	☐	I did not get on with my employer	☐
I was ill	☐	I did not think the work was relevant to me	☐

Other (*please write in*) .....

19. Were you visited by your teacher while you were on your placement? *(please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ No ☐ **If No, go to Q21.**

20. If Yes, what did you discuss with the teacher during the visit? (*please tick as many boxes as apply*)

Whether I enjoyed it	☐	Whether I had any problems	☐
Whether I was meeting my placement objectives	☐	Whether I could use my experience for school work	☐

Other (*please write in*) .....

21. How relevant was your work experience to your school studies?
(please tell us what subjects you are studying by ticking the appropriate boxes in the first column)

For each subject you have ticked, please tick a further box:

a) in the second column if you used your knowledge of the subject during your placement, and

b) in the third column if you used the experience gained in your placement in class work.

	Yes, I am studying this subject	**I used it during my placement**	**I used my work experience in classwork**
Business studies	☐	☐	☐
Design and Technology	☐	☐	☐
IT	☐	☐	☐
Mathematics	☐	☐	☐
Science	☐	☐	☐
Foreign Languages	☐	☐	☐
English	☐	☐	☐
History	☐	☐	☐
Geography	☐	☐	☐
Art	☐	☐	☐

22. How often did you use a computer during your placement? *(please tick one box)*

Never ☐ 1 Occasionally ☐ 2 Frequently ☐ 3

23. **If you used a computer did you use: (please *tick all that apply*)**

A word processing package	☐	A spreadsheet package	☐
A database package	☐	Communications (e-mail, Internet etc.)	☐

Other (*please write in*) .....

24. Was a written review of your placement made when it was finished? *(please tick one box)*

Yes, for my Record of Achievement	☐ 1	Yes, for some other record	☐ 2	No	☐ 3

25. The following are statements about work experience. We want you to say how strongly you Agree or Disagree with each statement by ticking the appropriate box. Please read each statement carefully before responding and tick one box per line.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
I did not understand the point of my placement before I went	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
There was not enough preparation before my placement began	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
If I had my time again I would choose a different placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I thought the work on my placement was difficult	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I did not like the people I worked with	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The placement helped me decide about my career	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My placement involved doing something that interested me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My placement was not long enough	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My placement gave me a good idea of what work is like	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My work experience was relevant to my school classwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I might get a job where I did my placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall I was happy with my placement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for completing this form.

Please place the questionnaire in the envelope provided and return to your careers teacher, who will send it on to us. No stamp is needed.

If you have any queries about this questionnaire please phone Sheila Honey on 01273 686751

Institute for Employment Studies, Mantell Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RF

PRE-16 WORK EXPERIENCE

Confidential to the Institute for Employment Studies

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by some-one with knowledge of how work experience is organised in your locality (which may be based on a local authority area, TEC area or some other boundary). Please answer the questions as fully as possible by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided. **Don't worry if you cannot answer all the questions**, although you may like to pass the form on to some-one else if you feel they would give a fuller reply.

Please return the completed questionnaire to IES in the reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any queries, please contact Sheila Honey or Jim Hillage at IES: telephone 01273 686751. Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Background

1.1 What is the geographical area covered by your answers to this questionnaire? *Please write in.*

.....

1.2 What is the basis for this area? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

Local Education Authority area (county) ☐ TEC area ☐

Local Education Authority area (metropolitan borough) ☐ EBP area ☐

Other, *please specify* .....

1.3 In which TEC area or areas does your locality fall (or what is the name of the TEC if you are answering for a whole TEC area)? *Please write in name of TEC(s).*

.....

1.4 Is the provision of work experience in your area funded, in whole or in part, through TVEI? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

If Yes, when will TVEI funding cease? *Please write in* .....

If No, when did TVEI funding cease? *Please write in* .....

1.5 Who contributes to the costs of providing work experience placements in your area (both directly and indirectly, *ie* in cash and/or in kind)? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

Schools ☐ LEA (centrally held funds) ☐

TEC ☐ Careers Service ☐

No-one ☐ Other, *please specify* .....

.....

2. About the area

2.1 How many secondary schools (**of all kinds** *ie* state, grant maintained and independent) with year 10/11 pupils are there in the area covered by this questionnaire? *Please write in.*

.....Don't know ☐

2.2 How many of these secondary schools are independent or grant maintained? *Please write in.*

Grant maintained ..... Don't know ☐

Independent ..... Don't know ☐

2.3 In this academic year (95/96) approximately how many pupils are there in Year 10 and Year 11, in the area covered by this questionnaire? *Please write in, including those in independent schools, if known.*

Year 10 pupils ..... Year 11 pupils .....

3. Provision of work experience placements

3.1 For the current Year 11 pupils, approximately what proportion will have been on work experience placements by the end of the 95/96 academic year? *Please write in.*

.....

3.2 For your current Year 11 pupils, approximately what proportion took or are due to take their work experience in the following academic terms? *Please write in.*

Summer term Year 10 ..... per cent of pupils

Autumn term Year 11 ..... per cent of pupils

Spring term Year 11 ..... per cent of pupils

Summer term Year 11 ..... per cent of pupils

3.3 For the current Year 11 group, approximately what proportion of work placements were or will be for one week, two weeks *etc? Please write in.*

one week ..... per cent of pupils

two weeks ..... per cent of pupils

three weeks ..... per cent of pupils

other, *please specify* ....per cent of pupils

3.4 On average, what proportion of pupils complete their placements? *Please write in.*

.....per cent

3.5 If pupils do not complete a placement, what is the main reason? *Please tick one box.*

pupil and supervisor did not get on ☐

pupil dissatisfied with work given ☐

placement was not what pupil initially chose ☐

employer was dissatisfied with pupil ☐

other, *please specify* .....

3.6 If a pupil does not complete a placement, is an alternative placement offered? *Please tick one box.*

Yes, in every case ☐ Yes, in some cases ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

4. About the programme

4.1 Are placements organised on an individual school-by-school basis or is there some form of central system? Please indicate:

a) the extent to which the various types of secondary schools in your areas organise their own placements. *Please tick one box per line.*

	All (ie half or more)	Most (ie under half)	Some	None
Independent	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grant maintained	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other state	☐	☐	☐	☐

b) the extent to which the various types of secondary schools in your area come under a centralised system. *Please tick one box per line.*

	All (ie half or more)	Most (ie under half)	Some	None
Independent	☐	☐	☐	☐
Grant maintained	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other state	☐	☐	☐	☐

c) whether some other form of provision exists in your area. *Please write in.*

.....

.....

.....

If NOT using a centralised approach for ANY part of the area, go to Q4.3

4.2 If using a centralised approach for all or part of the area:

a) which agency (or agencies) co-ordinates the work experience? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

local TEC	☐	Education Business Partnership	☐
Local Education Authority	☐	Careers Service	☐
Trident	☐	TVEI	☐
School consortia	☐	Other, *please specify*	

b) what services does the agency (or agencies) provide? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

co-ordinates dates to avoid bunching of schools	☐
operates a computerised database of placements	☐
provides a system for health and safety vetting	☐
provides for networking/INSET of school co-ordinators	☐
operates a quality assurance system	☐
supports curriculum development in work experience	☐
provides curriculum support material for schools	☐

other, *please specify* .....

4.3 Are all workplaces providing placements for the first time checked for health and safety? *Please tick one box.*

Yes, by personal visit ☐ Yes, by other means ☐ No ☐

4.4 **Is a risk assessment of the workplaces providing placements conducted by those responsible for organising work experience?** *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

4.5 How many workplaces already used for placements are checked each year? *Please tick one box.*

All ☐ Most (*ie* half or more) ☐ Some (*ie* under half) ☐ None ☐

4.6 What training in health and safety have those responsible for vetting employers' premises received? *Please write in*

.....

.....

.....

4.7 To what extent do work experience programmes at schools in your area adopt the following practices? *Please tick one box per line to indicate what proportion of schools adopt each feature of work experience practice.*

	All (ie half or more)	Most (ie under half)	Some	None
have their own policy statement on work experience	☐	☐	☐	☐
view work experience as an integral part of PSE	☐	☐	☐	☐
view work experience as an integral part of careers education and guidance	☐	☐	☐	☐
involve employers in the preparation for the placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
encourage pupils to take non-stereotypical placements	☐	☐	☐	☐
provide parents with information about the benefits of placements	☐	☐	☐	☐
have identified specific learning objectives for pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐
encourage pupils to develop their own learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐
include health and safety awareness as part pupils' preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐
ensure that all pupils receive teacher visits during their placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
have a debrief on return to school	☐	☐	☐	☐
include employers in the debrief	☐	☐	☐	☐
record pupil achievement from work experience in the National Record of Achievement	☐	☐	☐	☐
formally evaluate the whole work experience programme	☐	☐	☐	☐

4.8 Who is responsible for matching pupils with placements on offer? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

year teacher/tutor ☐

careers teacher/in-school work experience co-ordinator ☐

external agency co-ordinator ☐

PSE teacher ☐

pupils find their own placements ☐

other, *please specify* .....

.....

4.9 What criteria are used to match individual students and placements? *Please tick as many boxes as apply.*

previous work experience (eg p-t job)	☐	pupil's curriculum	☐
pupil's desire to taste particular careers	☐	careers guidance given	☐
project and/or assignment work	☐	choice of specific company(ies)	☐
core skills pupil wishes to develop	☐	don't know	☐

other, *please specify* .....

4.10 Are pupils offered a choice of placements? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

If Yes, what degree of choice do pupils have? *Please tick one box.*

free choice ☐ restricted choice ☐

If restricted choice, *please give details* .....

.....

4.11 Do employers have the opportunity to select their work experience pupils? *Please tick one box.*

Yes, in most or all cases ☐ Yes, in some or a few cases ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

5. Costs

5.1 Do you know the average cost per placement in the area covered by this questionnaire? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐ **Go To Q5.4** Don't know ☐ **Go To Q5.4**

5.2. If yes, what is the approximate average cost per placement? *Please write in.*

£ .....per placement

5.3 What is included in your cost per placement figure, eg admin costs, travel, salaries, school-based costs including teachers' time *etc.*? *Please write in.*

.....

.....

Don't know ☐

5.4 Do schools pay a central agency for support with the provision of work experience?

Yes ☐ No ☐ **Go To Q6.1** Don't know ☐ **Go To Q6.1**

5.5 If yes, what is the approximate average payment? *Please write in £* ..... *per placement*

6. Impact of New Funding

From April 1995, new funding for work experience has been provided, via TECs, under the Competitiveness White Paper in England and 'People and Prosperity' in Wales.

6.1 Is work experience in your area supported through the TEC by the new funding? *Please tick one box.*

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

6.2 In your view, to what extent has any of the following happened, **as a result of the new funding?** Please circle a number from 1 to 5 against each statement with 1 = great extent, through to 5 = no extent.

great extent	considerable extent	some extent	a little extent	no extent
1	2	3	4	5

Funding from the LEA has decreased	1	2	3	4	5
More employers have been brought into the system	1	2	3	4	5
The health and safety vetting of potential placements has improved	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers have been provided with more training on work experience	1	2	3	4	5
White Paper funding has replaced funds from other sources without bringing additional value	1	2	3	4	5
There have been moves to develop a centralised placing service	1	2	3	4	5
The TEC has become more involved in the provision of work experience	1	2	3	4	5
A quality assurance system has been developed	1	2	3	4	5
More attention has been paid to the use of work experience as a means of developing core skills	1	2	3	4	5

7. General comments

7.1 Do you have any other comments regarding the changes in the quality of work experience in your area as a result of the new funding and/or the general provision of work experience? *Please write in.*

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In case we have any queries we would be grateful if you would give your name, job title and telephone no.

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Thank you very much indeed for participating in this survey. Please return the questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope or to IES at the Freepost address below.

All questionnaires will be treated in confidence.

If you have any queries about the study, please contact Sheila Honey or Jim Hillage at:

Institute for Employment Studies, Freepost BR1665, Mantell Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9ZX

Tel: (01273) 686751 Fax: (01273) 690430

Appendix C: Bibliography

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Appendix D: Minimum Criteria for Quality Work Experience

The TEC should ensure that the co-ordination of work experience includes:

- a shared agenda for planning and action between schools, employers and work experience co-ordinators
- a mechanism and strategy across the whole area, with commitment from individual schools for finding, co-ordinating and matching placements to pupil need, linking them to school curricular objectives
- a quality framework which meets **TQASM**[1] requirements including health and safety and insurance requirements. The arrangements should include:
  - **Preparation** — agreeing individual objectives as part of the pupil's overall learning experience. This should involve the pupil, teacher and employer; parents should be advised, the pupil briefed by the employer on the terms and conditions of the placement and the programme of work and by the teacher on the purpose on the experience in the curriculum.
  - **During placement** — structured monitoring and review of the experience against objectives involving the pupil, employer and teacher, with revision and adjustment as necessary. Access to a named responsible person both within the placement and outside, to deal with difficulties.
  - **Post placement** — evaluation of the placement experience and outcomes achieved for the pupil, and a review of the learning as an integrated part of the curriculum; employer endorsement of the work experience in the pupil's National Record of Achievement. Involvement of all parties in the evaluation process to inform future planning and continuous improvement.

[1] TQASM requirements do not apply in Wales where there are alternative arrangements.

Pre-16 Work Experience in England and Wales

J Hillage, S Honey, J Kodz, G Pike

Work experience is a key educational element and is believed to make an important contribution to young people's decision-making. Around 85% of pupils in England and Wales undertake work experience in the last year of their compulsory education. This study, carried out for the Department for Education and Employment, is the most comprehensive and in-depth study to date of what they do and how it is organised. It is based on a national survey of work experience co-ordinators, supplemented by visits to 30 case study schools in all parts of the country.

The Institute for
Employment Studies
Mantell Building
University of Sussex
Brighton
BN1 9RF

Telephone: [illegible]
Facsimile: [illegible]

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